BELIEVE YOU ME!

NINA WILCOX PUTNAM

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AUTHOR OF "ADAM'S GARDEN," "THE IMPOSSIBLE BOY," ETC., ETC.

NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO

R. J. S.

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BELIEVE YOU ME!

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I

LADIES ENLIST

I

I WASN'T going to make no statement about this here affair; and I wouldn't even yet, only for our publicity man. The day the story leaked he called me up in the A. M., which is the B. C. of the daytime, and woke me out of the first perfectly good sleep I'd had since Jim pulled that stunt and floored me so.

First off, I wouldn't answer the phone; but Musette stood by me with it in her hand and just made me.

"For my sake, mademoiselle!" says she, just like she used to in our act on the big time, which we played before I got into the dancing game. "For my sake, mademoiselle," she says, "do not refuse to talk with the publicity man!"

Well, when I heard who it was I seen some

sense in what she says; so I set up amid my black-and-white-check bed, which—believe you me—is as up to date as my latest drawing-room dance. And I grabbed off the phone.

"Yes," says I in a fainting voice; "this is Miss La Tour. What is it, please? I'm far from well."

"Cut out that stuff, Mary!" says a male voice. "This is Roscoe. I want you to give out a statement about you and Jim splitting up."

"I *won't!*" says I, very sharp. "Whatter yer think I am?" I says. "That's nobody's business but our own!"

"Oh, ain't it, though?" says Roscoe, very sarcastic. "The biggest parlor-dancing outfit in America busts up and you can't be seen, even, for two whole days! The stage at the Royal ain't notified that your piece is called off; the De-Luxe Hotel don't get no notice that you ain't going to appear; and all the info' I could get when I called up your flat is that you was gone out!"

"And so I was!" says I, indignant.

"Then I call up Jim's hotel and they say he's gone!" shouted Roscoe. "Hell!" says he, forgetting that me and the telephone operator

both was ladies. "Hell! What kind of way is that to treat a guy you're paying three thou. a year to for getting your picture in the paper every time you sneeze?"

I didn't have any comeback about that, for there was certainly some truth in what he says. But I wasn't to be put down so easy.

"I guess I know my business, Ros," I says, sharp, "or I wouldn't be living in a swell flat on the Drive, all fixed up like a furniture shop, with a limousine and two fool dogs, and earned every cent of it myself, and no one can say a word against me, if I didn't know my own business. So there!"

"Looka here, Mary," says Roscoe. "There's going to be a lot of talk up and down the Rialto if you don't come across with some explanation. I'm comin' right up to get it."

"No, you don't," I says, for I hadn't had my facial massage in three days, and, after all, Roscoe is a man, even if press agents ain't exactly human. "No, you don't, Ros!" I says. "If I gotter make some statement, I'll write the dope myself and you can fix it up after—see? It's a big story, but delicate, and I'm going to have no misunderstanding over it."

"All right, Mary," says Ros. "But you get

the stuff ready for the morning papers. I'll be up for it."

Then he hung up and I knew I had to come across. Besides, Ma come in just then; and while I may boss my press agent, and even sometimes my partner and Musette and the two dogs, Ma sorter gets my goat. Ma had on a elegant rose-silk negligee I give her; and as usual, she had it ruined by tying a big gingham apron over it, which made her look the size of a house, but sort of comforting. She stopped by the bed and set both her hands on her lips —the way she does when she don't mean to be answered back.

"Now, Mary Gilligan, you get right up and wash your teeth!" says Ma, "and do your three handsprings and other exercises, decent and proper; and then eat the breakfast I got cooked for you."

Funny thing, but Ma ain't got a mite of dramatic sense. I just can't understand it, after her having been with the circus so long on the trapeze, until she got too heavy after I come; and since then in the wardrobe-end of the theater, and all. I ain't never been able to break her in to none of the refinements of life, either, and she will go into the kitchen for

all I say; and some day I just know she'll call me Gilligan in public. And a nice laugh that'll get!

But, anyhow, I usually do what she says, because Ma is a fine trainer; and—believe you me—I wouldn't be able to hold on to Jim's neck and swing out straight twenty times round, like I do—or did—only for her and her keeping me on the job like she's done. The only other trouble with Ma is, she can't seem to properly understand that it's my artistic temperament which has brought in the cash—that and some good looks, and me realizing that this refined parlor-dancing stuff would go over big. Of course Jim's being able to wear a dress suit like he'd been born in it has helped some, even aside from being such a fine partner; which brings me back, as they say, to the tale.

Well, I done my exercise, and so forth, and then I had Musette bring up the sofa, a elegant gilt one—for we got what Ma calls Looie-the-Head-Waiter stuff in our parlor—to the window, so's I could lay and look dreamily out over the autos on the Drive to the ships in the river; you know—the German ships which have been taking out their naturalization

papers, or something. And, as I lay there thinking, I come to the conclusion that if I told about the split I better tell all, including my own enlistment.

Oh, how well I can now understand why many men enlist, having been through it all myself! And how then they long to get out, and can't, and realize that they was boobs! And how they learn that they weren't boobs after all, once they got used to it! Do you get me?

Well, anyways, I decided to tell the whole story, which, of course, begun at Ruby Roselle's party.

I think I don't hardly need to state that I don't generally go with that Roselle crowd. No acrobatic dancer could and keep her health. And—believe you me—every drawing-room dance act that is worth a thousand dollars a week has acrobatics, and good sound acrobatics, as its base. Well! As far as Ruby Roselle and her crowd is concerned, far be it from me to pass any remarks. But any one in the theatrical line will tell you that a girl which has made a reputation only on the color of her hair and is not averse to tights don't have to lead the rigid life of a first-class A1 dancer,

leaving out all judgments as to character, which are usually wrong anyways.

But, having said that much, I will only add that I have never gone out a lot, and seldom without Ma. And while champagne is not exactly a stranger to me, owing to Jim and me always having to have it served with our dinner at the Ritz each night—which any one with sense knows is all publicity stuff and we never drink it—still, I'm not in favor of champagne parties, which they generally end in trouble; and this one of Ruby's was no exception.

Indeed, I wouldn't of gone in the first place only for us unfortunately being on the same bill at the opening of the Superba Roof, which, of course, being the big midnight show of the year, and the rest of the leads all having accepted, and Ruby being in so strong with the management, it would of been bad business policy to refuse.

When I pointed this out to Jim he couldn't see it at first, owing to me never having gone on such parties; and nobody can say any different, with truth. But the Superba contract was the biggest thing we had got yet. And, coming on top of the twenty minutes in Give Us a Kiss, the twenty minutes at the De-Luxe

Hotel, the net profs. was pretty fair. So, for once, we accepted an invite to one of Ruby's famous blow-outs.

Ruby Roselle's house was something wonderful, but not to my taste, there being too much in it, besides smelling of cologne and incense, which, from her singing Overseas in red-white-and-blue tights, was more or less to be expected. Also, the clothes on her and the other girls was too elaborate. My simple little real lace, and my hair, which Musette always does so it looks like I done it myself, made them seem like a Hippodrome production alongside of a play by this foreigner, Ibsen—do you get me? I was proud of this; for—believe you me—getting refinement means work, just like any other achievement, and I had modeled myself on Mrs. Pieter van Norden for years, than whom there is surely no one more refined by reputation, though I had never seen her. I could see Jim felt the same about all this, and we exchanged a look on it; for, besides being engaged to be married we was the best of friends when we come in—when we come in! Remember that!

After we said "How do ye do?" to Ruby, I whispered to Jim not to celebrate too much.

He ain't a drinking man if for no other reasons but those of my own; but just oncet in a while he'd get a little more than he should, and this opening night the show had gone awful big. Had he but heeded me better! Alas! Nothing doing; it was all in vain!

For description of party see any motion-picture film on Vice. Why waste words on what is so well known? And—believe you me—this was just like a fillum; and, as I have said, nothing like that for mine, usually. But, even so, we might of got off safe and home without no trouble—only for Von Hoffman and the baby alligator.

It seems like this here Von Hoffman was stuck on Ruby; in fact, it was him that suggested her singing Overseas in that fierce costume. Also, he gave her the alligator, she having tried to pick on a present he couldn't possibly get when he wanted to buy her something. But, being German by descent, he had the efficiency to get it, anyways; and there was the alligator at the party, about fifteen inches long, with a gold collar and diamonds in the collar—and we at war!

Well, it seems this alligator hadn't eat since it come; and after Ruby had a double Bronx

and two glasses of champagne the memory of his hunger began to worry her—do you get me? So she had him brought in and set in the middle of the supper table on the orchids at two dollars per each, which he sat on without moving while the crowd tried everything on him, from olives to wine, with no success. The alligator seemed a awful boob, for he just lay there like a stuffed one, which we knew he wasn't on account of his not having eaten.

Well, Jim hadn't heeded me. I guess the truth must be told, though, honest, he had took but very little; still, being unused to it, the effect was greater—do you get me? And pretty soon he and this Von Hoffman was kidding each other and that alligator something fierce.

Now Jim took a hate on this Von Hoffman bird the minute he laid eyes on him, partly on account of the costume of Ruby, and also on general principles, because of the bird's accent. But, the alligator not moving or nothing, Jim asks if the alligator understands only German.

"In all probability," says Von Hoffman; "he is a high-class alligator."

"Then he ought to understand American,"

says Jim. "He'll have to eventually; why not now?"

"There's nothing to prove that," says the German bird with a sneer. "He will probably get along very well as he is, with German only."

Jim looked mad as a hatter; but instead of taking it out on this Von Hoffman, as he had ought to have, he turned on that poor dumb beast.

"Well," says Jim to the alligator, "here's where you learn some patriotism."

And he leaned 'way across the table until his face was only a inch or two away from the alligator's. Jim looked that animal straight in the eye and spoke very severe.

"To hell with Germany!" says Jim.

And with that the alligator snapped—snapped right onto the end of Jim's nose! Oh, my Gawd, but I yelled! So did Jim—believe you me! And then we all tried to get that fiend of a pro-German alligator off Jim's face. When they succeeded in making him let go you had ought to of seen Jim's nose! It had four holes in it and was bleeding something fierce.

Oh, may I never live to see such a sight

again, let alone having to go through what followed! For once I forgot my refinement completely, and I remember yelling at Jim to kill that German. For if he didn't sick his alligator onto Jim, who did? And there he stood laughing at Jim for all he was worth; and Jim never offered to fight him!

Believe you me, all my sympathy for Jim melted right away when I seen he wasn't doing nothing but stand there holding on to his nose and moaning.

"I know alligator bites is deadly poison!" He kept saying it over and over again, while Von Hoffman was laughing himself sick.

"I hope it is poison!" he says. "I hope it is, you jackanapes of an American dancer!"

At this I walked right up to that Von Hoffman bird.

"I'll get you for this!" I says. "Somehow I know you're a wrong one, and *I'll* get you, even if Jim don't want to! I'd enlist to-morrow if I was a man and get your old Kaiser as well!"

Then, the next thing I knew, me and Jim was in the limousine, on the way to the hospital; and Jim was still moaning over being poisoned by the alligator and getting blood all

over the place, and the car just relined and everything! I didn't say a word just then, because, of course, you must stick to a pal in time of immediate trouble—do you get me? But I was boiling mad inside, though worried a little about the poison. Still, Jim's not hitting that bird, Von Hoffman, was worse to me than death itself.

At the hospital the chauffeur and me got Jim inside somehow and to a desk in the hall. There was a snappy-looking nurse sitting there with a book, and our coming in at that hour no more worried her than a fly in cold weather. She just looked up quiet and spoke —sort of unhospitable.

"Name of ailment?" she inquired.

"Alligator bite!" I told her, brief; and I will say this got her goat a little, because she made me say it twice more before she would believe me.

Then she directed us down a long hall, and a young guy in a summer suit of white duck stopped reading the newspaper long enough to give Jim's nose the once over.

"No cause for alarm," says this bird. "The nose will be about twice its normal size for a day, that's all!" All! And, as if that wasn't

enough, he painted the nose and all round it with some brown stuff, which stopped the bleeding but made Jim look like he was made up for some sort of comedy act. Jim was perfectly sober by then and quit talking about poison, and etc., and when he was back in the limousine I just let myself go and bawled him out good and plenty.

"Now see here, Jim," I says, "I've stuck by you to-night long enough to make sure you ain't goin' to die or nothin'; and now I'm through!"

"You been just fine, Mary," says Jim, trying to take my hand. I took it away quick.

"You don't get me!" I says. "I mean I'm through for keeps. The engagement is broken, and everything!"

"Whatter yer mean—broken?" says Jim, sort of dazed.

"Just that!" I snapped. "Here you get tight and take a insult from a German; and, as if that wasn't enough, you go farther and get bit by a pro-German alligator! And you don't even offer to fight the German who owns the alligator, either! And, what's furthermore, you've got your face swoll up so's you won't be able to dance to-morrow night; and

that iodine won't wash off; and the act is crabbed in the bud—do you get me? Crabbed! And I'm through—that's all! So don't never come near me again!"

Believe you me, Jim tried to make me listen to reason; but I couldn't hear no reason to listen to, and so wouldn't let him say much. Then Jim got mad and bawled me out for breaking my rule and going on the party, and by the time we got to my place we wasn't speaking at all—not even good night or good-by forever!

II

For hours and hours after Ma got me to bed I just lay there thinking and aching and feeling all hot and ashamed and terribly lonesome, and with my career all ruined because of the Germans—to say nothing of having been obliged to become disengaged to Jim.

And then, just as I was nearly crazy wondering how I was to get my self-respect back, I got a swell idea. I would enlist! Ladies could. I remembered reading a piece in a newspaper some place about yeowomen or something. And as soon as I realized that I could serve Uncle Sam and help get even with

that bird, Von Hoffman, and the Kaiser and the alligator, and lose my personal feelings in public service, I got the most wonderfully easy feeling round my heart and dropped right off to sleep. But when I woke up in the morning it was something fierce, the way I felt. Believe you me, it was just like I had ate Welsh rabbit the night before, or something—the weight that was on my chest. At first I couldn't make out just what it was. Then I remembered. I had lost Jim! Of course I hadn't lost him so much as shook him; but it was all the same, or looked that way in the cold gray dawn of ten A. M.

Honest to Gawd, I never knew how fond I was of Jim until I woke up that day and realized he was gone forever! But I wouldn't of phoned him and say I'd changed my mind—not on a bet I wouldn't. And, anyways, I hadn't changed my mind. The evidences begun to pile up against him. I commenced to remember how he had been away on some mysterious trips so many afternoons for the last four or five months; and maybe with some blonde, for all I knew. And then his going to pieces like that over a mere alligator bite, the way he done; and, worst of all, not hitting

that German, even though in pain, and crabbing our act by getting bit on the nose.

The more I thought about it, the worser I felt, laying there in retrospect and negligee. And I couldn't see no way of us ever getting together again—even when he called up and apologized; which, of course, I expected he would do any minute. But he didn't; and by the time Ma came in and routed me out of bed I had myself worked up so's I was crying something terrible, and hating Jim as hard as I could, which would of been enough to kill him—only for the pain in my heart for loving him.

While I ate only a light repast of ham and eggs, and a little marmalade, and etc., Ma made me tell her all; which I done the best way I could with crying in between. And then I told her about me having made up my mind to enlist. She was some surprised at that, though not much. Ma, having lived through two circuses and a trapeze act, it is sort of hard to surprise her very much—do you get me? So all Ma says was:

"Well, Mary Gilligan!" says she. "Can ladies enlist? I had a idea," she says, "only gentlemen was permitted."

"No," says I. "I see a piece in the paper where ladies can go in the navy—yeowomen they call them; a fancy name for a stenographer!"

"A whole lot too fancy!" says Ma, very prompt. "And no daughter of mine, a decent, respectable girl, is going sailing off on no battleship with a lot of sailors—not to mention submarines; not if I know it!" says Ma. "So, Mary Gilligan, you may as well put that idea out of your head, let alone you ain't a stenographer and couldn't learn it in a month."

"Well, Ma," I says, "maybe you're right; and I do get seasick awful quick. But—oh, Ma! I got to enlist some place. Can't you see the way I feel?"

Ma could.

"I know!" she says, very sympathetic. "I was the same when your pa missed both the third trapeze and the life net. I would of enlisted when he died if there had been a war. And, of course, you feel like Jim was dead. How about the Red Cross?"

"Won't do for me," I says, prompt. "I don't see myself sitting around in no shop, with a dust cloth tied over my head, selling tickets. I got to do something active or I'll go bugs!"

Then Ma had a real idea.

"How about this here Woman's Automobile Service?" says she. "The one I read you the piece about? You're a woman and you got a auto."

"Ma, you're a wonder!" I says. "Look up the address while I get my hat on! Tell Musette to call for the limousine; and watch me make a trial for my new job!"

So they done like I asked, and I kissed Ma and Musette good-by; also the two fool dogs, for I had a sort of feeling like I was going into battle already.

"When Jim calls up tell him it's no good—he can't see me," says I, the last thing. And then I set off in the limousine.

Well, I'd put on a very simple imported model and a small hat, and only my diamond earrings, and a brooch Jim had give me, when we was first engaged, over my aching heart. I wanted, above all things, to look refined; for, even if the U. S. Army isn't always quite that, still, this was a ladies' branch of it. And you know what women can be—especially in organizations; though I admit I hadn't had much previous experience with them, except the White Kittens, which Ma insisted on me keep-

ing up with and contributing to their annual ball, because of she having always belonged. And—believe you me—the scraps I seen at some of their Execution Committee meetings would make the Battle of the Marne look like a pinochle post-mortem!

Well, as I was saying, I took no chances on appearances of refinement in this case, not knowing exactly what class of ladies would be running the Woman's Automobile Service. And, even when I got to their office, it took me several minutes before I got the right dope on them and their line—do you get me?

In the first place, it wasn't at all like the White Kittens' Headquarters, in the Palatial Hotel ball-room. Instead, it was a shop on a swell side street, with two very plain capable-looking dark-green ambulances standing outside. My limousine had to stop next door on account of them.

Well, I got out and walked across and into that shop. And—believe you me—it was the plainest place you ever saw; not even so much as a flower or a rug to give it a womanly touch. But neat! My Gawd! And there was three young ladies there, all in the snappiest-looking uniforms you ever want to see—dark green,

like the ambulances, with gold on the collar, and caps like the Oversea's Army, and the cutest leggings! My!

Maybe you think they looked like a chorus? They did not! They was as business-like as English officers. Over in one corner a frowzy-looking little dame was sitting, reading a book. There wasn't no unnecessary furniture in the place, and 'way at the back was a door marked Captain Worth—Private, which seemed funny.

The minute I come in one of the girls jumped up and says what could she do for me?

I seen at once she was a perfect lady.

"I am Marie La Tour," I says in a very quiet, low-pitched voice, like a drawing-room act.

"Yes?" says she. "And what can I do for you, Miss—er——"

"La Tour!" I says again, as patient as possible.

But it was plain she didn't get me, even the second time, though it's a cinch she heard me all right, all right. But the name simply didn't mean nothing in her young life. Was I surprised? I was! Of course if I had said "I am Mrs. Vernon Castle," and she didn't know who it was, I wouldn't of got such a jolt.

But Marie La Tour! Well, there's ignorance even among the educated, and I realized this and didn't try to wise her up any. After all, I was not out for publicity, but for serving my country. Besides, I had heard right along that the army was full of democracy; and, of course, this was some of it.

"Well," I says, "I would like to enlist. My heart is broken, but full of patriotism, and this seemed a good place to come."

"Good!" says this young lady, which I had noticed by this time she had a lieutenant's uniform on her, but not by any means intending she was glad my heart was broken. "Good!" she says. "Sit down and let me tell you about our organization."

"Is it the regular army?" I asked.

"Not yet," says she; "but we hope we will eventually get official recognition. We are already used by the Government for dispatch and ambulance service and as escorts and drivers for officers and members of the various departments; also, as government inspectors. So you see it is a very live work."

"And it's a awfully pretty costume," I says; "so snappy."

"The uniform is only the outward sign of

what we are doing," says Miss Lieutenant. "You have a car?"

"Outside," I says; "eight-thousand dollars, and all paid for. You can have it if it's any good to you. Ma always prefers the street car anyways."

"Thank you; that is splendid!" says the lady officer, very pleasant, but not exactly excited over my offer—which was some offer at that.

She took out a slip of paper and begun filling in some blanks on it.

First, the make of the car, and then the answers to the questions she shot at me.

"Can we have it at a moment's notice?" she said. "Yes? Good! Is it new? In good condition? Do you loan or give it?"

"Give!" I says, brief. "I am not going to be a piker to Uncle Sam."

At this the lady lieutenant actually came out of her shell enough to give me a smile.

"That's the spirit!" she says. "We sometimes have as many as twenty offers of cars a day. But, as a rule, they are half-time loans. Can you drive?"

"Drive a horse?" says I.

"No, no," says the kid, serious again, "a car, of course!"

"Why, no," says I, feeling sort of cheap. "Isn't there anything else I can do?"

"Plenty," she says, cheerfully; "but you will have to learn to drive, first of all. You must have a chauffeur's license, a doctor's certificate of health, two letters of recommendation from prominent citizens as to your loyalty and general character, and a graduate's certificate from a technical automobile school."

"Anything else?" I says, sort of faint.

"Well, of course, you will have to take the nursing and first-aid course at St. Timothy's Hospital," she says, "and the regular U. S. Infantry drill. But that's about all."

"Do I have to learn all that stuff before I can come in?" I asked, feeling about as small as when I had my first try-out on the big time circuit.

"Oh, no," says Miss Lieutenant; "you can sign your application right away if you like. Then you can come in immediately and start rookie drill and the first-aid work with the service while you are getting your technical training."

Believe you me, my breath was about taken away by all this stuff. I don't really know now just what I did expect when I first come

into that shop, but I guess I had a sort of idea they'd give me a big welcome and I'd get a costume of some sort; and, after that—well, I don't really know. I certainly never expected what they handed me. But I was game.

"When can I commence all this?" I says.

"When do you want to?" says Miss Lieutenant.

"To-day," I says firmly. At this Miss Lieutenant actually smiled again.

"Good!" says she. "The minute you bring me that health certificate and those letters of recommendation I'll sign you up and you can start in at the Automobile Training School. To-morrow morning is the time at St. Timothy's Hospital and to-morrow afternoon is rookie drill."

"And when is the auto school?" I says.

"Every afternoon," she says.

"Then," says I, "I'll get them letters and the certificate here by noon. And if you O. K. them I'll just start in this P. M.—if it's all the same to you."

"Good!" says Miss Lieutenant, evidently not displeased, yet determined to show no emotion.

Then she got up, indicating that our busi-

ness was over, clicked her heels together like a regular officer, and made a stiff little bow. Oh, wasn't she professional, just!

"Well, I'll be back," I says, and started to go. "I'm sure I can get everything but the technical stuff; and I'll get that if I die of it!"

III

And—believe you me—I had no idea how near true them words was when I uttered them. I was almost at the door when the frowzy little dame in the corner, which I had forgotten she was there, come over and touched me on the arm.

"I beg your pardon, my dear," she says; "but I want to tell you I think your spirit is fine. And don't let any fear of the technical course deter you. Even I was able to do it."

Was I surprised? I was! But she seemed very sweet and kind, though so unnoticeable; so I just says thanks, and then—believe you me—started out on some rush!

First of all, I hustled up to old Doc Al's place, which Ma and me has him for a doctor; though Gawd knows there ain't never a blessed thing the matter with our healths. Still, since

her trapeze days Ma has always felt that emergencies do happen. Well, of course, he give me a perfect certificate in less than ten minutes' time, and I was off to see Goldringer, head of the dancing trust; and him and his partner, Kingston, each give me a elegant letter of recommendation, than which I could scarcely of got letters from any more promient citizens—unless, maybe, Pres. Wilson.

Well, anyways, I took all three recommends down to the young lady lieutenant, and there all was the same. Well, it was still lacking five to twelve when I come in, and Miss Lieutenant looked quite some surprised, though she tried not to. The letters and the doc's certificate was O. K.; and the first thing you know, I was signed up and given three passes. One for the auto school for two o'clock that same P. M.; one for the hospital, calling for me to be on hand for rehearsal of the nursing act at nine o'clock next morning. The third was also a call for rehearsal—a outdoor drill in the park at three P. M. next day. It looked like I was going to have a busy life.

"Well," I says, "would you like the car now?" I says. "I can walk home just as good as not."

"No, thanks," says Miss Lieutenant. "We will call upon you for it when it is needed."

Believe you me, I was grateful for that, because I ain't used to hustling round in the early morning, and I had hustled some this time. So I climbed in and says "Home, James!" and dropped in on the seat and was carried uptown for lunch.

While on the way I got the first chance I'd had all morning to think about Jim, and to wonder what he had said when he phoned to apologize. And did the ache come back in my heart when I got thinking of him? It did! I felt almost sick with lonesomeness by the time I got to the flat. And whatter you think? Jim hadn't phoned at all! Not a peep out of him!

At first I thought there must be some mistake; but after I'd rowed with the operator in the hall, and with Ma and Musette both, I come to realize that the split between me and Jim was real—that we was off each other sure enough. And it was not so surprising that a man which didn't hit a German whose alligator had bit him wouldn't know how to treat a lady!

But somehow Jim's being so mean about not phoning perked me up a lot and give me cour-

age to think of going into that auto school. I had commenced to be awful doubtful about it; but Jim's neglect, together with the lunch Ma had fixed, set me up a lot. And by one-thirty by my wrist watch, and a quarter to two by the mantel-piece clock, I had the strength to struggle into a *demitallieur,* which is French for any lady's suit costing over sixty dollars, and get to the auto school by the time the lady lieutenant had told them to expect me.

Oh, that auto school! The torture chambers of this here Castle of Chillon has nothing on it and—believe you me—the first set of tools a person going into it needs is a manicure set. The next thing they need is a good memory, the kind which can get a twelve-hundred-line part overnight; which no dancer can nor is ever supposed to!

One thing I will say for that school, though —they was not such a ill-informed lot as the Automobile Service. From the very minute I set foot inside the place they knew who I was, and the manager give me the pick of half a dozen young fellows who was just filled with patriotic longing to help me qualify for the service.

After giving them the once over I finally

decided on one lean-looking bird, who seemed married, and quiet, and likely to teach me something about the insides of an auto, instead of asking me questions about the steps of the Teatime Tango Trot, and did I feel the same in my make-up?

Well, the first thing this bird asks me is do I know anything about a car? And I says, know what? And he says, well, can I name the parts of a car? And I says, yes; and he says for me to name them. So I says color, lining, flower holder, clock, speaking tube and chauffeur.

Well, the bird says so far correct; but that wasn't enough, and he guessed we better begin at the more fundamental parts and would I just step inside?

Well, it seems this auto school undertakes to teach you everything about a car from the paint on the body to the appendix, or magneto, as it is called, in twenty lessons; which is like trying to teach the Teatime Tango Trot, with three hand-springs and twenty whirls round your partner's neck, by mail for five dollars. Which is to say it can't be done.

First off, the instructor hands you a bunch of yellow papers with a lot of typewriting on

them—twenty sheets in all, or one per lesson, and all you got to do is learn them good and then put into practice what you learn; and after that what you can't do to a car would fill a book!

Well, after you grab this sheaf of stage bank notes you look at number one and follow the bird that's teaching you round the room while he reels it off. I guess the idea of you holding the paper is to check him up if he makes a mistake. Anyways, this bird let me in among a flock of busted-looking pieces of machinery and begun talking fast. At first, I didn't get him at all; but when I got sort of used to it I realized he was saying something like this:

"The crank shaft is a steel drop-forging having arms extending from center of shaft according to number of cylinders. It is used to change the reciprocating movement of the piston into a rotary motion of the flywheel; it has a starting handle at one end and the flywheel at the other, as you observe. We will now pass on to the exhaust manifold, which is generally constructed of cast iron; it conducts the burned gases from the exhaust valve . . ."

"Hold on!" I says. "Exhaust is right! I'm

exhausted this minute. If you don't mind I'd like to sit down and talk sense, instead of listening to a phonograph monologue in a foreign language."

The instructor bird seemed sort of winded by this; but he got a couple of chairs and pretty soon we was sitting in a quiet corner talking like we'd both been on the same circuit for five years.

"Now listen here, brother," I says real earnest; "I want to learn this stuff, and learn it right! And I want you to stick by me and see me through, same as you would any male man that come in here to learn to be a chauffeur. Now take it easy and make me get it, and I'll play square and do my best to understand, without no nonsense."

"Say, you bet I will, Miss La Tour!" says this bird, who, married or not, had some spirit in him yet. "You bet I will! You see, a lot of dames come in here just because they ain't got nothing else to do. And you yourself must realize that a guy can only go through the motions when that's all they want."

Well, I could see that plain enough, and from then on we got along like a new team of partners with equal money in the act and go-

ing big on thirty straight weeks' booking. And—believe you me—there is a awful lot of interesting things about a auto; only you would never suspect it until you start to look at what is under the hood and body. As to understanding them all, you couldn't get it all off of no twenty sheets of yellow paper, nor twenty hundred, either! It's a career, really understanding a machine is; just the same as being a expert dancer. The guy that invented all them parts and got them working together certainly must of set up nights doing it.

Well, anyways, after two hours of lapping up this dope I got so's I could actually tell the cam shaft from the crank shaft and the difference between a cycle and a cylinder, which was enough for one day. And then I rode home to Ma.

Actually I had almost forgot to be miserable about Jim for two whole hours! But when I got home, and he hadn't phoned to apoligize yet, it all came back over me, and I simply felt that, automobiles and enlistments or no, I wanted to die—just die! I cried so bad that even Ma couldn't make me mind, and I was so tired I couldn't even taste the hot cakes she had fixed. I do believe Ma would think of

cooking something tasty if the world was coming to a end the next minute. She'd be afraid the recording angel would need a sandwich and a cup of hot coffee to keep him going while he was on the job.

But, anyways, they couldn't do nothing to me, or get me to go to the Ritz or the theater much less the midnight show; but the last did not matter, because I was wore out and asleep long before. And so Ma had to telephone that Miss La Tour was suddenly ill and unable to appear. I made her swear not to phone Jim nor let him in nor Roscoe, the publicity man, if they was to come—not on no account. And so I slept—poor child!—worn by the tossing of the cruel ocean of life—do you get me?

Well, next morning I was up long before Musette, and would of been obliged to dress unaided, only for Ma never having got used to sleeping late, partly on account of her always taking a nap just after the matinee performance when with the circus, and still continuing the habit. So Ma give me my coffee and a big kiss, and promised not to tell Jim nothing if he telephoned and I set off to be at the hospital at nine A. M., according to orders from Miss Lieutenant.

Well, there has always been something about a hospital I didn't care for much; not that I have went to many—only the night Jim got bit by the alligator; and once, when me and Jim was first engaged, he had a dog which we had to take to the dog hospital. But—believe you me—this St. Timothy's Hospital, was quite different from the dog hospital. It was a whole lot more like a swell hotel, with porters and bell boys and clerks and elevators, and everything except a café, as far as I could make out; and I'm not sure about that, but I don't suppose they had it.

I was so scared of being late that I was a little early and had to wait in a office. Pretty soon two or three other rookies come in; and, being ladies, of course we didn't dare to speak to each other at first. And then the ladies of the Automobile Service commenced coming in, wearing their uniforms. And were they a fine-looking lot? They were! I sure did wish I had a right to that costume; and I had a feeling that my heart wouldn't hurt near so bad, even when thinking of Jim, once it was beating under that snappy-looking uniform coat in Uncle Sam's service—do you get me?

Well, about this time we were let go up-

stairs in one of them regular hotel elevators, the rookies still scared, the regular members in good standing talking among theirselves, though several spoke to me nice and friendly; in particular, the little frowzy one which had been reading the book the day before in the office, but wasn't at all sloppy in her uniform.

Believe you me, I had a awful funny feeling in the middle of my stomach going up in that elevator, and not for the same reason as the Metropolitan Tower or any of them tall buildings, either. It was because of not knowing what was ahead of me and preparing for the worst. After I'd seen the kind of stuff them lady soldiers had to learn in the auto shop, it seemed like about anything might be expected of them in a mere hospital. So I got myself all braced up so's if I had to cut off a leg, or extract a tooth or anything, I'd be able to go to it and not bat an eye-lash—not outwardly, anyway.

But things is seldom as bad as you figure in advance—not even first-night performances. And the stuff which was actually put up to us was simple as a ordinary one-step. At least, it looked so from a distance. By distance I mean this: When the nursing instructor—a

lady in a white dress, with the darndest-looking little soubrette cap stuck 'way on the back of her head—when she stood up in front of the lot of us and put a Velpeau bandage—which is French for sling, I guess, and looks it—on one of the lady soldiers who was acting as mannequin, why, it looked easy.

While she was putting it on she handed us a line of talk something like that bird at the auto school, only not so fluent. And when she got through it was up to the rest of us to put the Velpeau bandages on each other. Gawd knows it was no cinch.

First, I set down, and a girl in uniform asked could she wrap me up. Well, it just naturally rumpled my Georgette blouse; but what's a blouse to a patriot? I let her go to it, and she done it so good and so quick that it was all over before I knew it, as the dentist says; and then it was up to me. Somebody give me a nice new roll of bandage and told me to get a model.

Well, I didn't have the nerve to ask any one, me being so new and the name Marie La Tour not meaning anything to nobody here. And so here was me standing round like a fool, not knowing how to commence, when up comes

that lady—her which had been so sloppy reading a book in the office.

"Can't I be your model?" she offered, and —believe you me—I could of almost cried, I was so glad to have somebody take notice of me.

I liked that dame more each time I seen her; she sure was refined. Even her sloppiness was refined—do you get me?

Well, as to real work, that sheaf of yellow papers up to the auto school had nothing on the bandaging game when it co.e to understanding it properly. Believe you me, that bandage had a will of its own, and the only way to make it mind would of been to step on it and kill it. But after a little I managed to tie up the lady pretty good, and before I was done I had my mind made up that Musette had lost her regular job and was going to be a bandage mannequin from that P. M. on until I got the hang of the thing.

Well, when the scramble of putting on the bandage was over and past, we was told that after we got on to the theory we'd be sent down to the Charity Ward for two solid weeks and practice what we'd learned.

Well, I thought, if I ever get there Gawd

help the charity patients! I guess the two weeks won't qualify me for the Auto Service. More likely I'll be ready for the Battalion of Death, or whatever they call them Russian women!

Well, when the bandages was all gathered up we was dismissed, as they call it, and told to report for drill in a certain place in the park, it being a fine day.

I must say I didn't think a whole lot of the hospital end of the game, because it wasn't pleasant. Of course I had no intention to quit in any way, but it sort of depressed me, what with all that sickness going on round me and the talk about wounds and bandages. And so my mind wasn't took off Jim, like it was by the auto work, me having a heart which needed a little bandaging—only that can't be done, of course.

IV

Well, on the way home I cried some more. And well I might. For when I got there had Jim phoned? He had not! Nobody but Goldringer, the manager, and Roscoe, the publicity man, and a few unimportant nuts like

that, and some of the newspapers. Ma had stalled them off pretty good by saying it was impossible to disturb me.

And it seems these people hadn't been able to locate Jim anywheres, either. At first that sounded sort of funny to me; but when I come to think it over I realized about his nose, where the alligator had bit him and the doctor had put on the brown stuff, from which he wouldn't naturally care to be seen—only no one could say that it would prevent him using the phone, which I also realized.

Well, after I eat a little liver and bacon, and so on, which Ma had fixed for me, and cried some, which made me feel better again, I started out for drill; which means that now comes the real important part of what happened and the true measure of the tale, as the poet says.

Well, it seems we rookies—and I must pause to mention that I don't like that word rookies; it sounds like something that would get the hook amateur nights. Well, as I was saying, we rookies was told to report at three o'clock for a private drill, all of our very own. But I was on to the fact that the regular members in good standing would be there ahead of us

to do well what we was about to do badly. So I thought I would go early and sit out in front, or whatever was the same thing, and try and get a line on how it was done.

Believe you me, there ain't many steps I can't get by seeing them done once; and if I was to of gone up to the Palace and watch Castle, or Rock and White, or any one of them, when I come away I could do the steps they pulled as good as if I had invented them!

Well, this was my idea in going up and seeing the ladies drill. So there I was at the park bright and early on a fine sunny afternoon, with the ladies all in uniform. But I wasn't in any too much time, for I'd no sooner got there than a big roughneck of a feller—a regular U. S. drill sergeant, I found out after—come up and yelled: "Fall in!" Just as rude as any stage director I ever seen! But the ladies didn't seem to mind a bit. They didn't fall into nothing though; they just hustled into line and stood there.

"Ten-shun!" says the feller. And they all stood like a chorus when the stage manager is telling them he is going to quit the show if they don't learn no better, and they're a bunch of

fatheads, and he's going to get them fired. In other words, they stood perfectly still.

Well, after that it was something grand, what those ladies did. I will say that when I come down to the park that afternoon I thought maybe I'd see some pretty fair chorus work; you know—formations, and etc. But this was no chorus work, it was soldiering. I never seen anything neater in my life. Was it snappy? It was! And when I thought how that bunch of ladies knew all about autos from soup to nuts, and about bandages, and etc., believe you me—that drill was the finishing touch.

For once in my life, I was anxious to be in the chorus, even in the back line. But not forever—not much! Believe you me, I made up my mind that, once I was really in it, I was going to work for a speaking part like I never worked before. And meantime I started in that direction by trying to figure out just what the ladies did when the stage manager—I mean, officer—hollered at them. And—believe you me—I had the turn-on-the-heel and push-off-with-the-toe idea on that right-and-left face stuff long before the regular members

in good standing was dismissed and we lady rookies was called.

Well, the same roughneck which had drilled the others had us simps wished on to him; and the first thing he done was to get us in a row —you couldn't properly call it a line—and then stand out in front and look at us sort of hopeless and discouraged, like a good director which has just finished with a bunch of old-timers and is starting with green material for the back row. Then he commenced talking.

Well, while this bird was getting off a line of talk about us now being soldiers of the U. S. A. and that being no joke to him or us, and etc., and etc., but no instructions in it, I let my mind wander just a little, on account of me having enlisted for deeper reasons than any he mentioned and him quite incapable of strengthening them.

And while my mind wandered this little bit, and I was thinking how funny it felt to be back in the chorus—do you get me?—I happened to take a look at the houses facing the park. And —believe you me—I got a jolt, for there we was standing right opposite Ruby Roselle's house!

Well, I was that astonished to realize it you

could of knocked me over with a sudden noise! Up to then I had been so interested in the other ladies and what they was doing I hadn't even noticed it.

And then, before I could really commence to think what a awful thing it would be if Ruby was to look out of the window and see me standing there, and think I was just in some chorus, and maybe that nasty Von Hoffman with her, and the both of them laughing their fool heads off, the officer says "Ten-shun!" he says. And, of course, I tenshuned, because of me being anxious to get everything he said when it come to instruction, and get it right.

Well, he told us a lot of dope on one thing at a time after he had got us in line, with the tallest at the right hand, which was me. And he told us very simple and then made us do it; and no camouflage, because—believe you me—he could spot any lady which done it wrong quick as a flash.

I will say he didn't have a whole lot of trouble with me, partly on account of me having had similar work before, and also my feet taking to new things so easy. But it took me about ten minutes to see that my patent Oxfords, with the Looie heels, was never going

to do for this work. Though I hate to say it, the other ladies sure did bother him a lot. They couldn't seem to mind quick enough. And he had a lot of trouble making them keep at attention.

Every time we'd be that way, just to show what I mean, the lady next to me would forget and powder her nose. Oh, that wasn't no new sight to me! I seen worse in my day until they get used to it. But did that officer get mad? He did!

"Whatter ye think ye're at?" he yells. "A pink tea? Cut that stuff now! Attention is attention and youse is standing at it," he says. "The worst crime youse can commit is move without permission."

And—believe you me—I sympathized with him, I did, little knowing what I was about to do next my ownself.

Alas, that in ladies obedience comes so much harder than following out a impulse! For the officer had no sooner uttered them words, and I agreed with him, than I went back on him something terrible.

It was this way: As I explained, we was drilling in the park, and not alone in the park but also opposite Ruby Roselle's house. Well,

of course, we was drilling on a open piece of grass, but at one side of this here grass was fancy bushes; you know—hedges and what not. And me, being on the end of the line, was nearest them bushes.

Well, as the sergeant was speaking I seen something move under one of them bushes; and, as Heaven is my witness, there was that pro-German alligator which had bit Jim on the nose and started all my troubles. There he was, walking very slowly, gold-and-diamond collar and all, and by his lone self, with nobody to protect him!

Well, I never stopped to think or salute, or ask nothing of nobody. All I knew for the time was that that damn alligator had somehow got out on his own, and that this was the chance of a lifetime. So, without more ado, I fell right out of attention and rushed over and reached into the bushes and grabbed the alligator by the tail.

Well, the officer hollered something at me, I don't know what, and all the ladies commenced screaming. And was I scared of that alligator? I was! But I held him up by the tail, and it didn't take me two minutes to find out

that he couldn't bite me that way; and then my scare was gone.

I felt so good about getting him I didn't even care much what was being said at me by the drill sergeant. I just stood there holding tight to the alligator's tail and grinning all over myself. But up come Miss Lieutenant, who had been watching our drill—the one which had signed me up—and she was as mad as a hornet, only having a awful time trying not to laugh.

"What's this?" she says, indignant.

Fortunately the alligator was in my left hand; so I saluted.

"Enemy alien alligator!" I says.

"Dismissed from the ranks!" she says. "And report to Sergeant Warner at Headquarters at five o'clock."

Gee, but that made me feel bad! But she wouldn't listen to no explanations at all, and there was nothing for me to do except walk off to where the limousine was waiting. And, in a way, I was glad, because suppose Ruby had of looked out and saw the alligator in my hand! I couldn't of got away with him.

As things went, I got him safe into the limousine. And—believe you me—I didn't

dare set him down for a minute for fear of his trying to get even with me; and so I was obliged to hold him at arm's length until we got home, which it is a good thing that it wasn't very far.

Well, when we got home you ought to of seen the elevator boys get out of the way! I walked in holding on to the alligator; and once I got to the flat there was Ma sitting in the Looie-the-Head-Waiter drawing-room, reading a cook-book. When she seen what I had I must say that for once she acted kind of surprised.

Of course, she ain't usually surprised, not after her having twice seen sudden death in the center ring, and the circus went on just the same. But alligators coming in unexpected is rather out of the usual. So Ma marked her place at sauces for fish, and took off her glasses so's she could see good, and give me the kind of stare she used to hand out when I got dirt on my Sunday-school dress.

"Why, Mary Gilligan!" she says. "For the land's sakes, where did you get that?"

"Caught it on the wing!" I says, very sarcastic, on account of my arm being nearly broke. "Can you cook it for supper?" I says.

"Well," she says. "I guess I can. What is it? A mock turtle?"

"It's a pro-German alligator," I says. "And if you'll just kindly help me instead of standing there staring at it, we'll intern it some place so's I can leave my arm get a rest."

Well, we certainly had a fierce time finding something to put him in, owing to us not being able to agree about what kind of a place he belonged. Ma was all for the goldfish bowl, claiming it was his native element; and Musette, who come in, thought the canary cage was better. But, realizing he couldn't jump very high, I had them get a big hat-box, and set him in that.

"And now what are you going to do with him?" says Ma as we all stood 'round looking at him; and my two fool dogs barking their heads off on account of a mistaken idea they had that he was a new pet. "What are you going to do with him?" says Ma.

"Unless you cook him, I don't know," I says—"except for one thing: I'm going to take that gold-and-diamond collar offen that brute and sell it and give the money to the American Red Cross; and I'm going to do it now!"

Believe you me, I was mad at that alligator!

And no wonder! Just look at all the trouble he made me! So I didn't waste any time getting action against him. First off, I persuaded Ma, who was real brave, to hold a ice pick down on his nose good and firm, so's he couldn't open his face. Then I managed, after a lot of trouble, to get that bejeweled sinful collar off his neck. And was it a swell collar? It was!

As soon as I had it off we just left that alligator interned in the hatbox and looked the collar over good. It was made all of a piece and the jewels were certainly wonderful. I know quite a lot about them, me and Ma always having invested that way when we had a little extra cash.

Well, as we was looking the stones over carefully, I happened to rub one which was close to the snap, sort of sideways, and right off something happened: That there collar parted—yes, sir; parted!—the lining from the outside, and in the place between the setting and the inside frame was a couple of thin slips of paper!

Well—believe you me—it didn't take me long to get the idea; not after having a father and a mother which had been in the circus and

had to think quick, and me having been associated with dramatic stuff all my life—do you get me? You do!

What with that collar having come off a alligator which I was already convinced was a pro-German, and knowing Von Hoffman had give it to Ruby Roselle, and got her to sing Overseas in that nasty costume made out of the national colors, which should never be done, I seen everything clear. Von Hoffman had a German job of some kind!

And when I unfolded those papers and seen they was full of funny little marks like a stenographer makes and then can't read, I realized that I had happened in on it; and so will any intelligent public.

Well, was Ma and Musette full of questions? They was! But I didn't wait to answer none of them; for I realized, also, that it was almost five o'clock, and I was supposed to report at Headquarters for a bawling-out at that time. And, after me having broken the rules once, I had no wish to do it again so soon.

Well, I just grabbed up the collar and the papers, and a clean pair of gloves, as the alligator had completely ruined what I had, and, having on my hat, waited not to explain, but

made a dash for the street. And by a big piece of luck there was the limousine, still standing outside on account of I having forgot to tell John to go. Well, I told him "Headquarters!" and off we started; and I got there just on the dot of five o'clock.

Well, Miss Lieutenant was there, and a Miss Sergeant—the one I was reporting to—and that frowzy-looking lady I have spoke of before, and several other ladies, still in their uniforms. And while I was explaining, in comes the captain, which she certainly is a smart woman. And they all listened while I reported and told the whole story about Ruby and me and Jim and Von Hoffman and the alligator. Then I saluted and handed over said collar and papers in evidence; and then the captain spoke up:

"This material, which is undoubtedly in a foreign code, will be of interest to the Secret Service," she says. "This Von Hoffman is probably one of those persons who are active in the obviously deliberate effort to cheapen and degrade the quality of our patriotism," she says; "for I have heard that is part of the German propaganda here.

"Private La Tour, in view of the unusual

circumstances, you are excused for your action in leaving ranks without permission," she says; "but next time remember to get your salute recognized," she says—"even under extreme conditions."

Then she went on, and she says:

"I understand you have given your car," she says. "Some member in uniform will take this evidence downtown in Private La Tour's car," she says, "which we now accept for the service."

Then she walked into her office, which said Private on it, and closed the door; and I watched one of the ladies in uniform go away, with the collar and the papers, in my limousine.

And after she had went I got a terrible scare, for it come over me all of a sudden that I hadn't even a nickel change on me to buy car fare home!

Well, just as I was standing there wondering how I was going to hoof it after the trying day I had had, that frowzy lady comes up to me, real kind, like she could almost see what I was thinking of; and she says:

"May I take you home in my car, Miss La Tour?" she says. "I have seen you dance so

often that I feel as though I knew you. I am Mrs. Pieter van Norden."

Just get that, will you, will you? Her that I had been modeling myself on for refinement for years! And—would you believe it?—on the way home she told me she had been trying to dance like me since the first time she seen me!

Well—believe you me—I felt so good over this, and over having got the goods on Von Hoffman, and about being excused for making that bad break at drill, and not getting fired out of the Automobile Service, that I only commenced feeling bad about Jim and me again after Mrs. Van Norden had left me at the door of my place, and I was going up in the elevator.

As I was letting myself in with my key I got so low in my mind again that I felt I would just die if Jim hadn't phoned; and I knew he hadn't, for I'd given up hope. Well, I opened the door and went in. And then I got another shock; for right in the middle of the drawing-room stood Jim.

Well, first off, I didn't know him on account of him being in khaki; but when he turned around I nearly died for sure! But I didn't actually die. What I done is nobody's busi-

ness but mine and Jim's. But I will say it was a second lieutenant-of-aviation uniform; and they show powder on the shoulder something terrible.

And he had been studying for months; and that's where he was every afternoon, and not out with some blonde, and wouldn't tell me for fear he wouldn't get it!

And I'm going to dance alone at night until he comes back, and all day drive a truck or something to release a man. And that's the whole inside story of the split, which is now readily seen is not a fight at all, at least not yet for we got married at once.

So, only one thing more: Regarding that alligator, Ma decided he would be too hard to cook. So Jim took him to camp for a mascot, and by the time he got through there he learned to understand American—believe you me!

II

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I

Ain't it remarkable the way the war has changed the way we look at a whole lot of things? Take wrist-watches for one. Before the military idea was going so strong on its present booking but a little while, wrist-watches had grabbed off a masculine standing for themselves, and six months before no real man would of been willingly found dead in one!

Then take newspapers! Oncet we used to look at them for news, and now we just look at them. It's kind of a nervous habit, I guess. And take simple little things like coal and sugar. Why once we paid no attention to them and now we look at them real respectful —when we see them. Which leads me on to say that the war has brought us to look at a great many things we never even seen before,

not if they was right under our noses. That's how I come to see that letter from the W.S.S. Committee—and would to Heaven I had not, as the poet says. For although—believe you me—most of the mail order goods a person buys is pretty apt to be as rep. because why would a customer write again which had been stung once, and thrift stamps is no exception, it certainly will be a long time before I fall so easy for anything the postman slips me. Next time I'll recognize that his whistle is a note of warning to more than them which has unpaid bills, which I have not and so never listened for him.

Well, anyways, the time this little trouble maker reached my side, I had slipped into a simple little lounging suit of pink georgette pajamas, and was lying on the day-bed in a regular wallow of misery on account of wondering if Jim was dead on the gory fields of France, or was it only the censor—do you get me? I was laying there rubbing a little cold cream onto my nose and thinking how would it feel to be always able to do so without losing my husband's love, which, of course, would mean he had died at the front, when in comes Ma with a couple of letters. I give one shriek

and sprung to my feet, like a regular small-time drama, and grabbed them off her, cold cream and all. And then slunk back upon the day-bed and despair when I seen they weren't from Jim. Ma stood there with her hands on her hips until she seen I wasn't going to break any bad news to her, when she left me in peace to read them. That is she meant to, but believe you me, it was far from it as Ma went into our all-paid-for gold furnished parlour and commenced playing on the pianola which Jim had give me for a souvenir before he sailed, and Ma, being sort of heavy and strong, after twenty-five years with a circus, she has a fierce touch.

Well, anyways, after she had got "Soft and Low" going strong with the loud pedal and no expression, I opened the first envelope. It was my copy of my new contract with Goldringer all signed and everything and calling for only twenty minutes of my first class A-1 parlour dancing act in his new musical show at the Springtime Garden entitled "Go To It" and which let all persons know that the party of the first part hereinafter called the manager was willing and able to pay Miss Marie La Tour, party of the second ditto, one thousand

dollars a week. Which certainly was *some* party to look foreward to and scarcely any work to speak of, a refined act like mine not calling for over three handsprings and some new steps, which is second nature to me and I generally make up a few every night for my own amusement same as some of those fellows which play the piano by hand—do you get me?

Well, anyways, when I had looked the contract over good and seen it really was, as I had before realized in the office, more than satisfactory, I salted it away in my toy safe which was nicely built into the mantel-piece for the greater convenience of burglars, and then I remembered the other envelope. All unsuspecting as a table d'hote guest, I opened the envelope, and then almost dropped dead.

It was from President Wilson!

Believe you me, I leaned up against the art-gray wall paper and prepared to faint after I had read the news. But instead of commencing, "I regret to inform you of the death in battle," or something like that, it started:

"The White House,
"Washington, D. C.

"I earnestly appeal to every man, woman

and child to pledge themselves to save constantly and to buy as regularly as possible the securities of the Government; and to do this as far as possible through membership in War Savings Societies.

"The man who buys War Savings Stamps transfers his purchasing power to the United States Government.

"May there be none unenlisted in the great volunteer army of production and saving here at home.

"WOODROW WILSON."

Woodrow Wilson! Signed—and addressed to *me!* Of course it didn't exactly begin "Dear Miss La Tour" or anything like that, and he had signed it with a rubber stamp or something which I did not hold against him in the least, me realizing at once what a busy man he must be. But coming as it done instead of a death-notice which I had by this time fully expected after no letter for over a month, it got to me very strong. It made me feel all of a sudden that I was a pretty punk patriot lounging around in pink georgette pajamas which—believe you me—is no costume for war-work and felt like going right

off and borrowing one of the gingham house-dresses which I have never been able to break Ma of, only, of course, it would of been too big and anyways what would I of done after I had it pinned around me? Which could be said of a whole lot of folks which were rushing into uniforms of their own inventing.

Well, anyways, after the first shock was over, I seen there was an enclosure with the President's letter. This was from some committee which had a big W.S.S. lable printed at the top and a piece out of the social register printed underneath, and was dated N. Y. It begun more personal.

"Dear Miss La Tour," it said. "As a woman so prominent in the theatrical world, we feel sure that you would be glad to take an active interest in the great Thrift movement which is now before the country. Will you not form a theatrical women's committee that will pledge the sale of twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of stamps on the first of the month? The first of every month will be observed as Thrift Stamp Day, and we will be glad to furnish you with all literature, stamps, etc., if you will notify headquarters of your willingness to do this work."

The letter was signed by some guy which it was impossible to read his name because he hadn't used no rubber stamp but did it by hand and had other things on his mind. But did I care? I did not! Believe you me, I had already decided to do like he asked, and why would I need to know his name when I wasn't going to write to him anyways, but to Mr. Wilson? Dancing as long as I have which is about fifteen years or since I could walk, pretty near, and not only professionally but drawing my own contracts from the time most sweet young things is thinking over their graduation dresses, I have learned one thing, if no other. Always do business with the boss. Refuse to talk to all office boys, get friendly with the lady stenographer, if there is one, but do all business with the one at the head—and no other! This motto has saved me no end of time which has been spent in healthy exercise under my own roof and Ma's eagle eye, which otherwise might have wore out the seats of outside-office chairs.

And so I concluded that I'd sit right down that minute and let Mr. Wilson know I was on the job. I knew I had some writing paper someplace and after I had took a lot of pow-

der and chamois and old asperin tablets out of the desk I dug it up:—a box of handsome velour-finish tinted slightly pink, with envelopes to match. And I got hold of a pen and some ink which Musette, my maid, had overlooked, she being a great writer to her young man which is French and Gawd knows how fluent she writes him in it, only of course being born over there certainly makes a difference.

Well, anyways, I cleaned off the desk and rubbed the cream off my nose and hands and set down to write that letter. And—believe you me—it was some job. I guess I must of commenced a dozen times and tore them up with formal openings—do you get me? And then I realized that the box of pink tinted was getting sort of low and I had better waste not want not, and so determined to just be natural in what I wrote but not take up his time with too long a letter. So at last I threw in the clutch, gave myself a little gas, and we was off, to this effect.

"My dear Mr. Wilson:—

"Many thanks for yours of the 25th inst. Will at once get busy at helping to make the

first of the month savings day instead of unpaid-bill day.

"Cordially,
"MARIE LA TOUR."

This seemed refined and to the point, and although I was awful tempted to put a P.S. asking did they know anything about Jim, I left off on account of me not believing in asking personal favors of the Government just now, as the war office was probably medium busy and the Censor might answer first, at that. So I just sealed it up as it was, and about then Ma left off playing on my souvenir and came in with a pink satin boudoir cap down tight over her head. Ma just can't seem to get over the idea that boudoir caps at five dollars and up per each is a sort of de lux housework garment.

"I'm just going in the kitchen and beat up a few cakes for lunch," said Ma, and withdrew, leaving me to lick on three cents and shoot the letter fatefully and finally down the drop near the gilt-bird-cage elevator of our home-like little flat. I felt awfully relieved and chesty somehow when it was done and with her good news ringing in my ears. For Ma is

certainly some cook, and she has it all over our chef, who—believe you me—knows she would never be missed if she went although Ma simply can't learn to stay out of the kitchen. And while she was busy with the butter and eggs and sugar and wheat flour, I was deciding to call a committee, because I knew that was the way you generally start raising twenty-five thousand dollars worth of anything, except a personal note.

Committee meetings is comparative strangers to me except the White Kittens Annual Ball, and a few benefit performances which last is usually for the benefit of those which are to be in it, they leaving aside all consideration of the benefit of the audience much less of the charity it is supposed to be for, and the main idea being how long each actor can hold the spotlight. You may have noticed how these benefit performances runs on for hours.

Well, anyways, I having been to several such as of course the best known parlour dancing act in America and the world, like mine undoubtedly is, is never overlooked. And I knew we had to get a place with a big table and chairs set around it and then the commit-

tee was started. So the White Kittens always having met in the Grand Ball Room of the Palatial Hotel, I called up the place and hired the room for the next morning at twelve-thirty, me being determined that my Theatrical Ladies Committee should get there directly after breakfast. The cost of the room was one hundred dollars, and I didn't know was the Government to pay it or us, but I was, of course, willing to do it myself if necessary. Anyways it was a committee-room, I knew that by reason of my having sat in it as such at least twice each year since the place was built —way back in '13. Then all I had to do was get my committee.

I had just about dived for the telephone book to see who would I call up, when Ma come in, taking off the pink satin cap and wiping her face.

"I made a omlette!" said Ma. "Come catch it before it falls!"

And so I called it the noon-whistle though some might of called it a day, and we went in and while we ate only a simple little lunch of the omlette (which we got at first base) and liver and bacon and cold roast beef and a few stewed prunes with the fresh cake, I told Ma

about what had happened, and how I had already got after the job.

"Well, Mary Gilligan, you done the right thing!" said Ma. "And what kind of costume are you going to wear?"

"The notices don't say anything about a uniform," I explained to her. "And I'm pretty sure you don't need any. This is the sort of thing our leading society swells are taking up so heavy," I says, "and to do it is not only patriotic but feminine to the core," I says.

"Will you have to stand on the street-corners and worry the life out of folks?" Ma wanted to know.

"Not much!" I says. "That stuff is for the hoi-poli and idle rich and kids and unemployed. That's where some of the new democracy comes in. Us with brains is to do the office work. Them with good hearts only can do theirselves and the country more service in the stores and street-cars selling something that don't belong to them," I says, "and—believe you me—I bet any American gets a funny sensation doing that little thing."

Ma looked real impressed for a minute, showing she hadn't any idea what I was talking about. Then she come back to her main

idea with which she had started which you can bet she always does until she gets through with it her own self.

"Well, I think you ought to have something for a uniform," she says. "Say a cap and maybe a trench coat!"

"I wouldn't wear no trench coat around the Forty-Second Street and Broadway trenches," I says. "I wouldn't actually have the nerve to insult the army like that!"

And Ma seen what I meant and said no more which it certainly is remarkable how good we get on for Mother and daughter.

So she only urged me to have another cream-cake, which I took and then I made for the phone and started calling up some ladies to form the committee out of. After thinking the matter over very careful I finally decided on six of the most prominent in my line which was, of course, the Dahlia sisters which had been often on the same bill with me and, of course, they ain't really related—no such team work as theirs was ever pulled by members of the same family, unless maybe when knocking some absent member—do you get me? Well, anyways, beside them I got Madame Clementina Broun, the well known Lady Baritone,

she being a rather substantial party which would give weight to us in cabaret circles. Of course Pattie The Dancer had to be asked, she being so prominent especially as to her tights and strong pull with Goldringer but I only done it out of diplomacy, which any one knows committees has to have a lot of. And she is less diplomatic than me as well, for instead of just accepting for her own self she accepts also for some friends which I had not invited, and she did not name. Pattie is alias Mrs. Fred Hutchins—him who gets up those reviews—you know—which is the only reason she is starred in them for Gawd only knows a child which had been started anywheres near right could of done her steps at the age of seven, they being mere hard-sole clog with no arm movements but having a great many imitators among college boys and such, that scare-crow stuff being as showy as it is easy.

Well, anyways, when I had got this far I had one vacancy on my hands and as our Allies was not sufficiently represented so far, decided on Mlle. DuChamps which of course she was really born in Paris, Indiana, but as a toe-dancer is unequalled in any language and

has a lovely broken accent. So there we had France. Madame Clementia was married to a Italian and he being dead or something I never asked what I felt she was a safe Ally because she couldn't of revolted, not if a schrapnel was to have went off under her. Pattie was of course Irish and the Dahlias' Jewish, and Gawd knows what the other girl was and I didn't care.

II

When they had all promised to get theirselves waked up on time and be over to the Palatial, I kind of weakened on Ma's suggestion about clothes. Of course I wasn't going to fall for that uniform stuff, but when me and Musette looked over my clothes I simply didn't have a thing to wear. Every one of my dresses was too morning or evening or something and above all things I do believe in dressing a part, and certainly I had nothing which looked like a chairmaness. So after getting into a simple little sports costume of violet satin and my summer furs, and taking a peep into the mail box to see had anything got by the censor yet which of course it

hadn't, I started out to buy me something which would be quiet but tasty and snappy because nothing inspires respect in a ladies committee like a dress none of them has seen before.

Have you ever noticed how you can pass up something which has been right under your nose day after day and then all of a sudden you hitch on to something which belongs to it and then all you see is that thing—do you get me? Say yellow kid boots. You never even noticed a pair, but one day you buy them and next time you're out every second woman has them on. Or you go into mourning for somebody and all of a sudden you commence noticing how many other people is the same only of course there ain't over the average—it's only that you notice it because you are in it. Well, believe you me—that first afternoon I went out after receiving the President's letter, I was that way with this W.S.S. stuff. Of course I had bought my thousand dollars worth the first week they was out, as had also Ma and she and I together the same for Musette. But we had done it on the Liberty Loans the same, also Red Cross and thought we was through and all the signs and posters and what not had

come to be invisible to me like a chewing-gum or a soap ad—do you get me?

But now I was in it and not only did I see every sign and see them good, but felt like I had one on my back and everybody must know about the letter and everything. I walked kind of springy, too, in spite of the furs, and then when I turned into the Avenue, me being on foot, a five mile walk per day having to be got away with by me or Ma would know the reason why, the trouble commenced. Believe you me, I must of refused to buy thrift stamps one hundred times in twenty blocks, and every time I said I had all I could, the look I got handed me would have withered a publicity man. There must be a hot lot of fancy liars among us, with no imagination, for why would W.S.S. still be on sale if everybody had bought that much? And when I wasn't refusing to buy stamps I was forking out quarters for everything from blind Belgian hares to Welch Rabbits for German prisoners. And it's a good thing I had a charge account to Maison Rosabelle's or I would never of got my dress. And the more I was pestered to buy them stamps the madder I got. I commenced to feel it was a regular hold up, and that the po-

lice ought to interfere. A person which is pestered to death will even sour on the Red Cross. I don't mean that they ain't humane, neither —only that they are human, and the most dangerous thing to do to a human is to bore it—any one in the theatrical professions learns that young and thoroughly. And when I realized that I was getting bored with this constant hold-up I got a fearful jolt and a cold chill.

Here I was undertaking to chair a committee to sell the things and Gawd knows my heart ought to of been in it with Jim over there and all, and it was, only getting bored with the war is kind of natural, it being so far off and nothing likely to do us personal bodily injury on the Avenue unless maybe the restaurants or a auto and that our own fault. And so soon as I realized what I was up against with the great Boredom Peril, I realized also what I had personally in writing promised Mr. Wilson, and took a brace. It was just like the early days on the Small-Time when the booking depends on the hand and the hand was the one which fed us—and not any too much at that with the carrying expenses—and the hand was getting weaker. Me and Ma sat up all

one night doping out my double handspring with the heel-click. And it was a desperate effort and we thought it was a flivver but not at all. When I landed on my feet after the first try-out, I knew I was there to stay, and any intelligent public will realize that I remembered it now. And by this time I had reached the store I was headed for.

I will confess that from the moment I had decided to buy a new dress I had my mind all set on what it was to be—something sheer and light—printed chiffon, and a hat to go with it. But by the time I had reached Maison Rosabelle my hunch on my new job was beginning to go strong and one of the things that worried me was that dress. Also my lunch. Sometimes it happens that too much of a good thing is the only thing which will turn you against it—do you get me? And Ma's cream cakes had this effect. Maybe had I eat less of them I would not have had no indigestion and so not counted their cost as Lincoln, or somebody, says. And if I hadn't had the indigestion maybe I wouldn't of worried over the dress. Well, anyways, the first person I see inside the store was Maison herself, very

elegant and slim, only with a little too much henna in her hair as usual.

"Well, Masie," I said when we had got into the privacy of the art-gray dressing room and lit a cigarette, while the girl went for some models. "Well, Masie, I want to know is business good?" Masie is her real name she having Frenchified it for business reasons, the same as myself.

"Oh, dearie!" says she. "Business is elegant! With so many officers in town, I can scarcely keep enough things in stock. The beaded georgettes go so fast, on account of being perishable. Ruby Roselle had three last week of me. One party and they're gone!"

While Masie and me has been friends ever since I can remember, her mother having been Lady Lion Tamer in the same circus with Ma and Pa's trapeze act, as she uttered them words, I commenced feeling a little coolness toward her. For once I get a idea in my head it's a religion to me, and the W.S.S. was getting to me.

"Dont you think maybe that's profiteering, Masie?" I ast.

Maison run a well manicured hand over her marcelle and smiled superior—she has always

prided herself on being sort of high-brow and reads *Sappy Stories* regular.

"Why, dearie, how you talk!" she says. "Dont you know that a little gaiety keeps up the morale of the country?"

"I'm not so sure about some gaiety keeping up the moral of anything!" I says with meaning, not wishing to directly knock anybody but still wishing Masie to get me. "And personally myself, I think any time's a bad time to waste money on clothes which won't last!"

"My goodness, Sweetie!" Masie shrieked. "What's gonner become of us if ladies was to quit buying? Tell me that? How we gonner hire our help, and all, and how can they live if we dont hire 'em? Have a heart!" she says. "And what are you talking about—you coming in after a new dress yourself, and only last week had two chiffons which Gawd knows ain't chain-armour for wear!"

"I know!" I admitted, "but I'm going to can my order. Just tell the girl to bring gingham or something which will wash—if you got such a thing!"

"Well, Mary Gilligan, I guess you're going nutty!" says Masie, but she gives the order,

and I choose one at $15—which could be dry-cleaned, and that was the nearest I could come to what I was after.

"You wont like it!" Masie warned me. "It's too cheap—better take a good silk!"

But I wouldn't—not on a bet. Even although what Masie said about cutting down too much on buying stuff sounded sensible, or would of only the question was how far can a person cut before they reach the quick? Of course I see her point, and she had as good a right to live as me. Yet something was wrong some place, I couldn't figure out where. So I just charged the dress and set out for home, and owning a cotton dress made me feel awful warlike and humble—do you get me?

But while I felt better about my dress, the cream-cakes was still with me, and, being now a sort of Government Official, they and that got me noticing the food signs, as well, and wishing I had eat only a little cereal for my lunch. That gave me a idea which on arriving home I handed to Ma.

"I have just bought me a wash-dress, or almost so, Ma!" I told her. "And honest to Gawd I do think we ought to eat to match it.

Suppose we was to go on war-rations of our own free wills?"

"Well, we eat pretty plain and wholesome now!" says Ma. "Just like we always done!"

"But times is different!" I says, toying with the soda-mint bottle, and who knows but what they were being more needed abroad? "And cream-cakes is a non-essential. Especially to one which has to keep her figure down," I says. "So for lunch to-morrow let's have cereal only," I says.

Well I hate to take pleasure from any one and the sight of Ma's face when I said this would of brought tears to a glass eye. But I felt particularly strong-minded just then what with the indigestion and no letter from the censor yet and Gawd knows that is no joke as they are certainly more his than Jim's by the time they get to me! But after I had told Ma how all the caviar had ought to be sent over to the boys and how food would win the war and how Wilson expected every man—you know—well, she got all enthusiastic over making up a lot of cheap recipes and we had the butcher and grocer pared down to about ninety cents each per day. Ma could just see herself growing slim, and she kept remembering

things she used to cook for Pa in the old days before she retired on the insurance money. And first thing you knew the time had come for me to go to the theatre. Just as I was starting for the door Ma mentioned Rosco, our publicity man.

"Are you going to call him or will I?" she wanted to know.

"About what?" I asked.

"Why about your committee-meeting tomorrow?" she says.

"Nothing doing!" I came back at her. "Would you invite a manager to see a practice-act? Its going to be amateur-night for me, tomorrow is, and no outsiders are urged to attend! And anyways, I'm not doing this for publicity which Gawd knows I dont need any, but for my Uncle Sam!"

"Well, thank goodness, you aint go no other relations you feel that way about," says Ma, "or we'd all be in the poorhouse shortly!"

III

Well, that night when I came home I cried myself to sleep with my head under the pillow so's Ma wouldn't hear what I called the cen-

sor, but slept good on account of the simple little war-supper of only lettuce and a cup of soup which Ma had ready for me, and in the morning was up with the lark as the poet says, only of course they was really sparrows, it being the city. Well, anyways, I felt good and husky and as early as eleven-thirty I was all fixed up in the new wash dress, which its a actual fact Musette had to sew it together four separate places that it come apart while putting it on me. The goods wasn't the quality I had thought, come to look at them closer, but anyways it was cheap and that was one good thing about it. Ma brought me in a shredded wheat-less biscuit and a cup of coffee, a sort of funny look on her face like she had taken her oath and would stick it out to the death. She didn't say anything, only set it down and I ate it, saying nothing either because it was what we had agreed we would get along on for breakfast. When I was through she give me a news item.

"The cook is leaving!" she says. "On account of the new rations."

"That's no loss!" I says gaily, because as a general thing Ma is only too glad when this happens.

"I ain't so sure!" says Ma. "I'm not as young as I was, and I cant do *all* the cooking!"

Well—believe you me—I sat up and took notice of that! Ma kicking at her favorite pastime. Something was wrong. But even then I didn't get what it was. So I just remarked we could eat our dinners at the Ritz that being good publicity anyways and always expected of me in full evening dress when I am dancing. So that much settled and there being no letter yet and me being sort of nervous about that meeting which was breaking ahead, I went and beguiled a hour at Jim's souvenir. I thought a whole lot of that pianola, he having given it to me just before he sailed, and as of course it was too heavy to wear over my aching heart which is generally supposed to be done with souvenirs of loved ones overseas, I put in a good deal of time sitting at it, and—believe you me—my touch is a whole lot better than Ma's which me being light on my feet by nature and business both, is not so supprising. Well, I got myself all worked up over Jim while playing "Somewhere A Voice Is Calling with Mandolin Arrangement" and a whole lot of expression and what with feeling a little low on account of the

patriotic breakfast, I was just in the right frame of mind to throw myself heart and soul into the good work before me—do you get it? You do!

Well, I had no sooner left the shelter of our own flat, than that same hold-up game which I had noticed so particular the day before was started on me. The elevator-girls, which had taken the place of a standing yet sitting army of foreign princes which had used to clutter up our front hall and the only excuse they had for living was the nerve they give the landlord when he come to price the rents:—well, anyways, the girls which had taken their places since the draft blew in, was selling W.S.S. Of course I couldn't buy any for the same reasons as yesterday. So they sprung a working girls War Crippled Aid Fund and I contributed to that, because I believe in girls running elevators. Why wouldn't they, when thousands has run dumb-waiters so good for years? Well, anyways, I give them something and escaped to the street only to be lit on for stamps by the first small boy I met. And after only seven others had tried me, I got to the Palatial Hotel, and—believe you me—by

that time worried pretty severely about how could a person sell twenty-five thousand dollars worth of the pesky things and not get slain by some impatient citizen who felt that I was the last camel and his back was broke, or whatever the poet says? Really, it was serious, and being the first of the Theatrical Ladies to arrive, the big ballroom with the table and seven empty chairs like a desert island in the middle of the floor, failed to cheer me any.

Well, there was a arm-chair at one end of the table and there being nobody around to either elect me or stop me, I grabbed off this chair and held to it with the grim expression of a suburbanite who knows her husband isn't coming but wont admit it, and a good thing I acted prompt as should be done in all war-measures, because pretty soon the other ladies commenced arriving. I guess they must of thought they could get a better part by coming early, they was so prompt, and by one o'clock they was actually all there except Pattie and her unknown friend, which was pretty good, the date having been twelve-thirty.

Well, we all shook hands and I arose from my seat but didn't move a inch away from it, having seen something of committee meetings

where the wrong person had it. And then they all sat down and took in my dress and hat and I theirs, and we was very amiable and refined and I felt so glad I had picked such a good bunch and wished Pattie would hurry so's we could commence, when lo! as the poet says, my wish was granted, for in come Pattie and with her her friend and My Gawd, if it wasn't Ruby Roselle!

Well, far be it from me to say anything about any lady, only pro-Germans is pro-Germans by any other name, as Shakespeare says, provided you can find it out, and here she was, butting in on a gathering of would-be Dolly Madisons and Moll Pritchers and everything, and I wouldn't of invited her for the world if only Pattie had mentioned her name. But here she was, all dressed up like a plush horse and so friendly it got me worried right away. Any one which has seen Ruby in her red, white and blue tights will at once realize what I mean, though nothing but the tights was ever proved against her. What on earth she wanted with our committee was very suspicious because why would she ever of taken a expensive and difficult present like a baby alligator from a

German which she once done, if not pro, her own self?

But time for starting something had sure come, if we was ever to get any lunch, so I got them all seated and commenced—a little weak in the knees which it was a good thing I was seated, but strong in the voice, so as to start the moral right—do you get me?

"Ladies of the Theatrical Ladies W.S.S. Committee," I began, being determined not to waste no time on formalities, which it has always seemed to me that on such occasions a lot of gas is used up in them which would have run the machine quite a ways if applied properly. We all knew we was the Theatrical Ladies W.S.S. Committee and I was the chairman, so why waste words making me it? "Ladies," I says, "I have a letter from President Wilson asking me to get to work, and so have formed a committee to sell twenty-five thousand dollars worth of War Savings Stamps on the first of the month. I sat right down and wrote him I would do it, and here we are. Of course this being the twenty-eighth of the month the notice is short. Probably he didn't expect us really to get to work until next month, but personally, myself, I think we

should surprise him by getting the money by Saturday night, which Saturday night is the first. Now, you Committee Ladies is here to discuss how will we do it. I would be glad to hear ideas, suggestions and etc."

Well, nobody said anything for a few minutes only Ruby put a little powder on her nose and looked at it critical in her vanity case mirror, which well she might for Gawd knows she had powder enough on her already. Then Madame Broun, the Lady Baritone, cleared her throat.

"I would be glad to give a recital," she said, swelling up her neatly upholstered black satin bosom, "and turn over the money it brings in. I presume the Government would hire the theatre for me."

"Well," I says, "that is a real nice suggestion only not quite practical. You see it wouldn't be right to ask the Government to pay for the theater in case it was a wet Monday and only a few came in out of the rain. Any more ideas?"

The blond Dahlia sister spoke up then.

"Whatever you suggest goes with me, Marie," she says, which was terrible sweet of her, only it's a darn sight easier to give a proxy

than a good suggestion, which I did not however mention, Blondie being a real fine Jewish American and a willing worker as I well knew.

"I thought of course it was a benefit we would give," put in Pattie in a voice which just plain dismissed every other possibility. "I have a new patter to 'Yankee Doodle' with a red, white and blue spot on me, at front center with the rest of the house dark. It ought to go big about the center of the programme."

After which modest little suggestion she sunk gracefully back into her seat and commenced shadow-tapping the tune with her feet under the committee table.

"Well, benefits is always possible," I said, "and of course we could have it with admission by W.S.S. only. But it's been done a lot and three days ain't so very much time in which to get it up in a way which would do your act justice," I says.

"Ah! *cheries!*" says Mlle. DuChamp. "Mes petites!" she says, whatever that was. "I have zee gran' idea—perfect! I will make zee speach on zee steps of zee Library of zee Public at Forty-Second Street and Feeth Avenoo. I will arise, I will stretch my han', I will call out 'Cityonnes! 'Urry up queek! Your coun-

tree call you—Formez vos battillions!' and while I make zee dramatic appeal zee ozzers can collect twenty-five t'ousand dollar from zee breathless crowd!"

She had got up on her box-toed shoes and was making the grandest gestures you ever see. Honest to Gawd I do believe that girl has herself kidded into believing that the Paris she was born in was France, not Ind. I kind of waved at her, and when she had flopped back into her place, completely overcome by her emotions, I suggested that maybe the Library wasn't as Public as it looked, being generally occupied of a fine afternoon by wounded soldiers making the same line of talk, and of course Mlle. DuChamps would be more *chic* and all that, but would she be let?

"Of course she wouldn't!" says Ruby, coming out of her vanity-case for a minute. "Of course not! My idea is that we all chip in say about seven thousand five hundred and let it go at that!"

Somehow this cheap-Jack way of getting out of doing any work by spending a little money, got my goat something fierce. Besides which it was Ruby's idea of patriotism and all against W.S.S. rules and everything, but for

the minute I was so floored I couldn't speak. The dark Dahlia did it for me, though, and much more contained than I could of at the time.

"That's mighty generous, Miss Roselle," she says just as sweet, "only you see me and Blondie has each got our thousand dollars worth and one person can't get more," she says.

"Well, I'll take a thousand dollars worth then," said Ruby, and I could see very plain that the matter was finished in her mind, and what would you expect different after them patriotic tights of hers?

"I'll take a thousand also," put in Madame Broun. "To tell the right truth I haven't a one. What do you do with the —stick them on the backs of letters like Tuberculosis, or Merry Xmas?"

Well, we explained they was not a additional burden to the postman but more or less of a investment. And then the awful truth come out that Pattie hadn't none either and that Mlle. DuChamps had always thought they was to put on tobacco boxes and candy and everything you stored up in the house to eat, though Gawd only knows how she got that idea except of course it's the truth that most people is

boobs, outside of their own line, more's the pity!

Well, anyways, we took in four thousand right then and there and so all that remained was twenty-one. Ruby undertook to sell another three among her personal friends, and the Dahlias said they thought they could raise as much more between theirselves. Then when Mlle. DuChamps and Madame Broun had concluded to take on three apiece there was eleven thousand dollars worth of friendless little stamps with nobody to love them but me. Well, with no better schemes than benefits and concerts and talks in sight, I see it was up to me to bite off the biggest slice of pie myself, so I said I'd take the remainder. Of course with my influence and name and all I would of had no trouble getting rid of them only by asking prominent men like Goldringer and Rosco and the Dancing Trust people beside a few more personal ones. And then when we had got this far I see some of the ladies commence looking at their wrist-watches for other reasons than to show they had them, and so hustled up the last of the business which was merely how would we print our forms for sub-

scribers to fill out. Ruby suggested a gilt-edge card tinted violet with whatever lettering I chose, and while I didn't care for it I agreed, being hungry myself.

"I do think it is awful fine of you to take on that big amount," said Pattie. "But you always was generous, Marie, I will say that for you."

"Ladies!" I said. "No thanks where they dont belong. Because I am undertaking this sale for far other reasons than you suppose."

But since everybody by then plainly cared more for their lunch than my reasons we parted, agreeing to send the money to my place on Sunday morning.

IV

But I will here set down my unspoken reasons, which was that fine as it is to walk out to your rich friends and pluck a thousand worth of stamps per each off them and of course nobody but thinks the rich should have them, too, I had a strong hunch that the reason for selling stamps at five dollars or even two bits, was because every one could get in on a good thing that way. Somehow there seemed something

too up-stage about going in only for the high spots, and after ordering the cards I hurried home full of determination to make a stab at selling to the common herd and with a terrible appetite and anxious as could be over the one o'clock mail.

Well, the last two was doomed to a immediate disappointment because the censor was sitting just as tight as ever and there was only cereal for lunch. Believe you me it give me sort of a jolt when I sat down to so little and Ma's face was not any too cheering. We commenced to eat in silence which being both perfect ladies was the only thing to do as it was also burned. But after a minute Ma lay down on the job. She pushed her dish over toward me in disgust.

"Try that on your piano, Mary Gilligan!" she says.

"Well, Ma, you know what war is," I says. "And we'll get a good meal at the Ritz to-night to make up!"

Well, anyways, sustained more by patriotism than by what I had eat, I set out to put over a scheme I had all hatched out in my head for using places which was already kind of organized, as my selling agents—do you get me?

And the first place I went was to Maison Rosabelle's because—believe you me—that cheap dress I had bought off her needed a plastic surgeon by then. Maison was as usual giving a unconscious imitation of a trained seal, switching gracefully around the store with a customer which she was hypnotizing into all forgetfulness of prices. But finally I got her alone long enough to express what I thought about the dress and any lady will be able to imagine what that was. Then I asked her could she fall in with my scheme which was on Saturday to take only Thrift Stamps or W.S.S. for each purchase and sell them the stamps herself. Maison didn't enthuse over the idea, though she's rich at that.

"Why, dearie! Not on a bet!" she said. "It ain't that I'm not patriotic, but this establishment is *exclusive!*"

Well, I seen there was no use arguing with her, and I guess there never is with a woman which is marcelle-waved every day of her life, not to mention that cheap fake of a dress. Next one I buy of her without a guarantee will be for her funeral! So I just left her flat and went over to Chamberlin's. Of course it takes a whole lot more brains to run a enormous

cabaret and restaurant like his than Maison has to use if less nerve, he not coming personally into contact with the customers like she does, and I counted on this. I went in by the main door where a lady sat selling W.S.S. and she bored me to death with them while a captain went to find Chamberlin. When I seen him coming I tried to assume that sprightly and convincing manner of the sidewalk W.S.S. hounds, but was overcome with that deep seated sense of being about to make a flivver, which also shows on most of them. However, Chamberlin was a genial good soul and was crazy over stamps. But he had beat me to it on the admission only by buying stamps on Saturday night.

"Better try among your rich friends, Miss La Tour!" he says. "And you'll be surprised how many you'll sell. That's the easiest way unless you use a gun!"

"I don't want to sell to my friends," says I. "I want to sell to everybody—get folks to chip in. The chipping-in idea is what is so good—get together and all that."

Well, believe you me—after this I tried a dozen places and every one of them, stores and all, where I had any influence or charge ac-

count, had got theirselves so full of W.S.S. schemes that I felt like a helpless babe in arms as the poet says, before I was through. There was no room for my little $11,000 worth any place: they had all stocked up, and what to do next I had no idea.

On the way to the Ritz that night Ma didn't talk steady like she usually does and seemed kind of low in her mind, and maybe in her stomach also which I was the same by then. Not to mention the censor which it is better not to for fear I might say what I thought and he a Government official.

But anyways no sooner was we inside the hotel than two society swells tackled us for W.S.S. Oh, they was democratic, just! They spoke right to us, and everything! But my goat was got by it.

"A regular hold-up!" I whispered to Ma. And as I spoke them fateful words I remembered that I owned a gun, which it was left from a piece I done for the movies and I had kept it for a souvenir. Of course I dismissed the thought at once like the sensible woman I am. But somehow it wouldn't exactly stay away.

Did you ever get to seeing things as they really was and wondering why on earth people go through such a lot of motions pretending things is not what they seem, as some guy so truly says—do you get me? As soon as I had said "hold-up" I realized that that was just what was being done. And when I realized that it was *necessary* to hold up people in order to get them to make a safe investment which would earn them a good net profit while saving their fool lives, I got so raving mad that a gun seemed too good for them. And mad at myself, too, for not seeing sooner how much my own Jim's welfare was hanging onto my shoulders. Somehow up to then I had really a idea that the bunch down in Washington was relieving me of all trouble and responsibility about this war. But now I seen it wasn't so. If the G.A.P. or Great American People was actually such boobs that they didn't flock up and wish their life savings onto such a scheme, they had ought to be made to, same as Ma used to hold my nose for my own good and believe you me—I can taste that oil to this day!

Well, anyways, this philosophy stuff kept going through my mind while running up a considerable check which Gawd knows we

needed it or the undertaker would of conscripted us. And then all of a sudden who did I see but Ruby Roselle only two tables away and with her a husky young lounge-lizzard which goes around with her a lot—you know —one of the kind whose favorite flower is the wild oat, but never has anything to spend but the evening. And him and Ruby had their heads together and was watching me like the German spies in a movie which every one in the audience spots except their victims which of course are looking at the director close up front which is certainly the only reason they are fooled.

Well, anyways, I was surprised to see Ruby because Broadway places is more her speed, and I never see her in such refined surroundings before. But I realizing about her kind of patriotism I commenced wondering wasn't she there to watch me? Though for what reason I had no idea.

That night after the show, I asked Goldringer wouldn't he use the admission by W.S.S. Saturday, and he wouldn't because he had it on for one of his other theatres. And so I went home in despair and a taxi, and was further cheered by a empty letter-box.

In the morning the cards come—a thousand of them—and certainly more elegant looking than I had expected, I will say that for Ruby and reading as follows:

"The Theatrical Ladies W.S.S. Committee will deliver to .....of ..... worth of W.S.S. stamps on presentation of this card. Payment for same is hereby acknowledged."

Then came a blank which it was up to me to fill in. Well, I didn't hesitate and after a hearty breakfast of crackers and milk and weak tea, I tied up the lace sleeves of my negligee and set to work at signing them. Believe you me, before I was done I quite see why President Wilson used a rubber stamp! But I didn't weaken until noon, when any one would have on the meal I'd had. And by then they was finished anyways and every one of them valid and as good as my cheque. Then just as I was feeling proud of myself in come Ma and I could see at once she was going to take a fall out of me in her sweet womanly way.

"If you ain't too busy with your war work," says Ma very gentle but firm, "I'd like to talk to you about something before we set down to

the skeleton lunch which is waiting and can be continued in our next for all I care!" she says.

Well, I got that gone-around-the-middle feeling which I always get when Ma gives me a certain look, just like I used to when she'd tell me soap was good for washing out the mouths of kids which had told a lie. And so I just set there and listened.

"Now, Mary Gilligan," she commenced. "Do you know the size of the cheque you signed over to the hotel last night?"

"About twelve-fifty," I says sort of getting a glimmer.

"When your Pa and me was married he give me twelve a week for all our meals!" she says, and set back and folded her hands in a way which said all she hadn't.

"But times has changed," I says sort of feeble.

"But appetites has not!" says Ma. "And how can you keep in good training on this war-nonsense?" she wanted to know. "Not to mention me, which it might improve my figure but never my disposition?"

"But how about making war sacrifices and

all, Ma?" I says. "Jim ain't eating like we done up till yesterday!"

"Nor he ain't eating twelve dollar dinners at the Ritz, neither," she reminds me, at which of course I shut up and she went on. "Now I dont believe being stingy to ourselves is really gonner help the war. You have strode in upon my department for once, Mary Gilligan, and I'm going to put you out! You don't know where to economize and I do. No more eating out, and a good sensible table at home, minus cream cakes," she says, "is what we do from now on!"

And with that she marches out leaving me flat as one of her own pan-cakes. Well, this was bad enough, but when Musette got after me as I was dressing to go for my five miles, I seen that my humbling for the day was not finished.

"That dress Madam bought yesterday," she began.

"You can have it!" I said, beating her to it, or so I thought.

"Thank you, I do not care for it," says Musette. I was just remarking it is really not fit to wear again. Madam would of done better to pay a little more!"

Can you beat it? You can not! Two falls from one pride! Believe you me I took *some* walk that afternoon, and if I had wore a speedomiter I bet it would have registered a lot over five miles. And while I was walking I kept getting madder and madder and more and more worked up over what boneheads people was and how was a person to economize nowadays and how on earth would I sell all them stamps by Saturday night with a matinée in between and keep my promise to President Wilson? It begun to look like I was going to have to become one of them sidewalk pests. I got a real good picture of myself going up to the proud or pesky passer-by, and getting turned down so often that my spirit was bent thinking of it.

But—believe you me—I made up my mind that if I had to hold up anybody to make them invest in the World's Soundest Securities or W.S.S. I would hold them up good and plenty and no disguise about it. I thought again about my revolver, the one which I had used it in the movies when I done "The Dancer's Downfall" for them and kept it for a souvenir. I was that wrought up over the situation that by the time I got home I had

pretty near decided I'd take that fire-arm to the theatre and lock the doors and come down front center and shoot out one of the lights to show I meant it and then take the money right off the audience. The theatre being my native element it seemed only natural to pull the trick there, only being a lady the gun really did look a little rough only not more so than the public deserved.

V

Well, anyways, I was certainly up against it with all them blanks still on my hands and no way in sight of getting rid of them. And just to make things nice and pleasant, what do I see when I come on the stage that night but Ruby Roselle and her pet lounge-lizzard which were sitting in a box. She certainly seems to go in for reptiles for pets. And no sooner did I get off after my eighth curtain call, than around she comes to my dressing room and hands me a check for her stamps and for the ones she had undertaken to sell and already had.

"I suppose yours is all sold too!" says Ruby. "You are so efficient, dearie!"

"Oh, mine are all right!" I snapped. "Or will be by this time to-morrow."

"Why, ain't they gone?" she cooed. And did I wish for my gun? I did! "Ain't you give any of them cards out yet?" she says.

"No!" I says. "But I will—I'll commence with you, dear Miss Roselle," I says. "And here you are"—and I filled out the receipt cards which I had a few in my vanity case for emergencies, and give them to her. When she took them I noticed she had a awful funny look in her eye, but at the time it meant nothing to me. Alas! Would I had heeded it more—but no—solid ivory! Solid ivory! I passed it up completely. And Ruby grabbed the cards, collected her new pet animal, and went away.

Well, my state of mind that night was distinctly poor, even after the nice little well-ballanced war-ration of hot chocolate and corn bread with brown sugar which Ma had for me and delicious as anything you ever ate if she did get the recipe out of a newspaper and they so unreliable nowadays. But no letter from Jim, and so after I had asked Ma if she thought it was right to wear black, I went to bed and fell into a exhausted sleep which lasted well on toward the box-office man's afternoon on, because Ma always lets me sleep late when I have to dance twice.

Well, anyways, I was so rushed getting to the theatre for the matinee that I hadn't no time to try any of that sidewalk stuff, only I did get a cheque from each of the other committee members and told Ma to send them receipt cards. And did I feel cheap? I *did!* A flivver, that was what I had made. But so long as Jim was surely dead by now, I didn't care for myself. Only my promise to Mr. Wilson made a lump in my throat while doing my three hand-springs and the "Valse Superb," which shows how bad I felt. And what do you know, when I took my encore, there was Ruby Roselle again, down in front and all alone.

This got about the last butt out of my goat and I sent an usher to get her, but Ruby had went before the usher had made up her mind to undertake the mission. I was just about wild all the way home, and the sight of Ma's face when I got there almost made me cry it was that sweet and friendly. Honest to Gawd when Ma has got her own way about anything she is just lovely to be with! And having got the kitchen back and the grandest dish of baked beans all full of molasses and salt pork for dinner, she was feeling fine and I was the

same under her influence and even let her play "Sing Me to Sleep" with the loud pedal on Jim's souvenir afterwards and never said a word to her about it, though suffering while I listened. And then it was time to go back to the theatre and I took Musette and that whole box of gilt edged securities which seemed no good to nobody, but I took them, and a good yet bad thing I did, for on the way downtown I decided what to do, and when I got there, called the ushers and gave them instructions and a little something else by way of promoting kindly feelings. And then with beating heart I beat it for the dressing room and commenced rubbing on my make-up cream with trembling fingers.

Did you ever make one of them critical decisions which you knew in your heart you was actually going to carry it through and no camouflage, even if it killed you and it very likely to? Well, when I decided to make a speech right out in public I got that feeling—do you get me? And any Elk or other lodge member which attends annual banquets will know what I mean. Honest to Gawd I nearly missed my cue, and after I finally got on the

stage the dance I did must of been either automatic or a inspiration and I don't know why they liked it out in front, but they did. All I personally myself could hear was "Ladies and Gentleman, I want to speak a word to you"—You know! And hand-springs in between! Well of course when I come out for my first encore I didn't have the wind to say nothing—But my eyes was as good as ever and there in a box was Ruby Roselle again!

Believe you me—that was a jolt and a half! Here she had come to give me the laugh I had no doubt, and somehow after the second call my wind was all of a sudden back good and strong, and with it came my courage. For I wouldn't of been downed by her, not for anything!

So stepping foreward in a modest manner I held up my hand and the house got quiet and listened. As I have said, the show was at the Spring Garden, and it's awful big and I had never knew how full of silence it could be until I heard the sound of my own voice all alone in it. But after a minute I got used to it, and so interested in trying to convince the folks, that I didn't care.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," I says. "This is

going to be a plain, good old-fashioned hold-up! If you listen hard, maybe you'll hear the screams of the women and children, and the groans of the wounded pocket-books! Far be it from me to do anything so unrefined as to actually use a gun on you," I says, "but I'm going to do the next thing to it. I'm going to sell eleven thousand dollars worth of W.S.S. right here and now, and you are going to buy them. I know all of you has probably been buying them all day and is sick of them, but I have personally promised President Wilson to do as much by to-night without fail and you must help me make good. And no matter how many you have bought," I says, "unless you have a thousand dollars worth you can spend another ten or so apiece. Now, as I say, I know this is a hold-up, because it is meant to be. And any public which can sit here in a theatre and feel anoyed at having to buy a few stamps when a million of our boys is over in far-away, sort of unreal France, giving their lives, had ought to have a machine gun turned on them from this stage instead of a line of talk! Probably this is the first time in the history of finances that it has been necessary to jolly a crowd into making a good invest-

ment. If I was selling stock in a fake gold mine," I says, "you would probably be climbing on the stage to get it! Now will everybody willing to take ten dollars worth kindly stand up?"

There was a few laughs, and a few people got up here and there, sort of shamefaced.

"Come on!" I says. "Come on—are you all cripples? You over there—only ten dollars—save it on next months grocery bill—all right—save it on your auto bill!"

A few more got up then, but not nearly enough and I caught sight of Goldringer in the wings by then and not having warned him what I was going to do, I could tell by his expression that I mustn't hold the stage too long or a militaristic system would right away be born in our theatre. So I got desperate.

"No more!" I called. "Oh, come on get up! Will I send for crutches, or are you only shy? Remember, I got that money promised! Only ten dollars each!"

But no more stirred. For a minute I thought my flivver was complete, and then I got a idea. I went over and beckoned to George, the orchestra leader, and shaking all over at my own nerve, I whispered to him.

George grinned and passed along the whisper to his crew, and in another minute that audience was standing, every last one of them, and —believe you me—the Star Spangled Banner had never sounded so good to me before!

Well, anyways, my pep all come back and I jumped off the stage as I see the ushers couldn't possibly handle the orders alone, and wait or no wait, the way that audience took my hold-up was something grand, it was that good natured, although of course a Broadway crowd gets sort of hardened to having their money taken away from them roughly. They was lambs, and took cards so fast I couldn't have shuffled them good if it had been a game.

Well, anyways, when I finally got back to my dressing-room and the trained animals had come on at last—believe you me—I was all in, but not a card left, and not alone eleven thousand dollars but thirteen-fifty in actual cash! I didn't worry none about having too much as I never see a committee yet which couldn't use more money than it had ast for, the White Kittens always having a deficit. And then I just put the boodle away safe in my tin make-up box which I had emptied because it looked

good, and took me and Musette and it home to Ma.

Well, that was about all for that, and I had a fine sleep that night after sending the President a wire telling him I had the money all right. And if only the censor had loosened up, I would have been perfectly happy, with all that cash in my little Burglar's Delight over the mantle-piece and a good real energy-making breakfast coming to me in the morning.

But alas for false security, as the poet says. No sooner had Ma and me ate breakfast next morning than in came Musette and says there are two gentlemen outside wants to see me. Well, it seems they wouldn't give their names so I says show them in for on account of Ma always making us dress in real clothes for breakfast Sundays, it was alright.

Well, in come two gentlemen then, and it was easy to see one was a cop. Why he didn't have green whiskers or something I dont know because the one citizen you can always spot is a cop, and that tweed suit was no disguise, although he seemed to think so. I got a awful funny feeling in my stomach at this sight although there was nothing on my mind but my

hair pins. The other was a gentleman and no disguise about him, and I sort of took to him right away and dropped my society-comedy manner which is such a good weapon of defense against strangers because I knew right away he would see through it on account of him being the real thing.

"Miss LaTour?" he says politely.

"Yes," I says, "what can I do for you?"

"Alias Mary Gilligan?" says the cop, which was right in character and hadn't ought to of got Ma's goat like it done.

"Alias nothing!" says Ma. "Gilligan is her right name and you can see my marriage certificate and the date is on it plain!"

"Better leave this to me for a moment, O'Rourke," says the nice gentleman, about Pa's age, he must have been. Then he turns to me while the cop took a back seat.

"Miss LaTour," the gent. began, "I am one of the local W.S.S. committee—Pioneer Division—Pierson Langton is my name. And I have come to see you concerning your sale last night!"

Well—believe you me—the minute I heard his name I had him spotted! One of the F. F.

V's of N.Y. and I had often seen his name in the paper with war-work and all.

"Do sit down, both!" I says real cordial. "I am so glad to see you! It's kind of you to come, because of course I was going to bring you the money the first thing in the morning! Just wait till I get my make-up box!"

And without giving him time to say another word I hurried out and got it, the cop watching me with his hand on his hip. When I come back and give Mr. Langton the box and key, he looked real surprised.

"Twenty-five thousand cash!" I says. "Would you mind counting it?" He give me one of the funniest looks I ever had handed out, but he done like I asked. Then he got up, box under one arm, and bowed, and sat down again.

"Miss LaTour," he said. "I think I win a bet with our friend O'Rourke, here! I was sure you were all right. Your reputation was on the face of it too valuable for such an open fraud. And your utter disingenuousness is the final proof!"

"Fraud! What do you mean?" I gasped.

"There's been a complaint about your selling W.S.S. without no authority!" says O'Rourke at this. "Entered last night by Miss Ruby

Roselle. We got your cards here, that she handed in. But you ain't got no stamps! I dont know but what we ought to make a arrest, Mr. Langton!"

"I will be obliged to you if you will let the matter drop for the moment," says Mr. Langton. "This young lady acted in good faith, I am convinced. And now, Miss LaTour, perhaps you will tell us how this all came about?"

Well, did I tell him? I did! I never told anything readier. And then I took out the President's letter which I had it on me, and told how I had writ to him at once, partially because I couldn't read the other fellows name.

"I accept the reproof," said Mr. Langton. "I will get a rubber-stamp to-morrow!"

Then his eyes twinkled at me in the nicest way, and I twinkled back, and after that I knew the cop hadn't a chance of running me in, which was a big relief, for my hands felt like a couple of clams, about then, I was so scared.

"So you ain't mad?" I says to Mr. Langton.

"Not a bit!" he says. "I think it can all be straightened out. But of course you understand that what you did was a trifle—er—irregular. If you will come down to headquarters to-morrow and meet the members of

our board, we will be glad to assist you in forming a more regular organization."

And I said I would, and then we all said good-by real friendly, even the cop. And I felt awful sort of excited and scared and glad that Ruby had pulled that stuff, for if she hadn't I might actually of gone to jail, I could see that plain enough now! And so, to let off a little steam when they had all gone I sat down to my souvenir and started off "Over There in Four Handed Arrangement." Then just as I had got it going good, Ma, who was reading the Sunday paper, gave a holler. I turned around quick, and there her eyes was popping out of her head and glued to the front page.

"Jim!" she shrieked. "My Gawd!"

Well, how I reached that paper I don't know, but somehow I did and there it was right in the middle column.

"American Dancer Now An Ace. James La Tour Brings Down Three Enemy Planes In One Afternoon."

Oh, my heavens! Didn't I yell, just! And me knocking the newspapers and the censor. And all the time Jim had been merely too busy to write!

III

HOLY SMOKES

I

To Miss Marie LaTour,
Palatial Apartments,
0256 Riverside Drive,
New York City,
U. S. A. America.

(Kindly forward if on tower)

Passed by censor.

DEAR MARY:

Well say little one, I am certainly glad your health, new contracts and the two fool dogs is both doing so nicely and as for the cigarettes they were O.K. not to say swell. Only dearie, it ain't hardly necessary to have my monogram on the next lot for Fritz has never waited for me to catch up to him so's I could offer him one and he's about the only person would be impressed by the J. La T. because our own boys kid me about any little

thing like that on account of their knowing me to be your dancing-partner and not to mention husband and they are still slow to realize that it takes a real he-man to swing you around my neck twenty times like we do in the Tango de Lux, and I have to continually keep showing them.

Then another good reason for no gold monogram is that the price of same would cover quite a bunch of cheap smokes and dearie handing them about is more to me than my own personal vanity and would be the same with my shirts if necessary, while over here in distant Belgium I realise it was also a waste to have them embroidered on the sleeve because the dam chinaman always used to mark them up with monograms of his own anyways.

Speaking of money we used to spend on unessentials before the war, I tell you dearie we certainly learn in the army, especially since getting into this recaptured territory, that many objects we would have swore could not be done without is laid off like the extra people after the ball-room scene and nobody misses them until somebody sends over one of them—like them monogramed smokes of yours. Immediately I got them I commenced to think

about little old B'way and dry-martinis and my little old roadster with the purple body and the red wheels, and us dancing at the palatial with the juice full on us, red and green, violet and amber. Oh Kid! it made me home-sick!! But then we got a order to start on cleaning up after them Botches again and so I forgot everything but you and my new step—which was forward, double line!

Well, sweetie, now about this smokes question. Of course your Ma having been with the circus is used to giving up things, as naturally in a trapese-act such as hers used to be she would need all the nerve she had and even eating a welsh rabbit would of been a wild party to her. The center ring is no joke and forty feet above it on a trapese from the center canvas less so. But trapese work has not yet been offered to the Allies except mebbe Itily on them mountains and any lady which starts a society to keep smokes from soldiers may be strong in morals but is surely weak in the head, which I never knew your Ma to be before. She being always not only a lady but a great little picker on contracts and what would we of done without her that time Goldringer tried to slip the "satisfactory to the

Goldringer Theatrical Productions Corp." stuff over on us and she spotted it?

But for the love of liberty can this idea of hers about it not being good for the boys to smoke and make her quit worrying about us tearing around France learning no new sins. For sweetie the crimes a man can committ on whats left of his pay after the alotment is took out and the insurance and the liberty bonds instalments would be sanctioned by anybody in the country even if his coller buttoned up the back. For take it or leave it, liquor, ladies and lyrics is as expensive here as north of 42nd str., and our pay dont go for them even after distracting the above.

Why me and a fellow went off on leave to a general store in a town which I couldn't spell for you much less mention it, even if permitted. But anyways we went to it and Mac bought some winterweights and they was four-fifty a pair and no better than the U.S. seventy-five cent kind, and I got two pair socks a dollar per each and two bananas for 25c, which only goes to show everything here is terrible expensive except nessessaties. So dont let your Ma worry over me spending my remaining nickel on vice.

I note what you say about the way folks at home get your goat by passing the buck on war-reliefs—if it's chocolet they say they've just given to tobacco, if it's tobacco they just bought a W.S.S., and if it's W.S.S. they just got a hatful of bonds, or if it's bonds they just give their last cent to chocolet—passing the buck all along the line. Well dearie, I guess mebbe that's their way of getting a little war-relief of their own, but as you say why would they need any relief when the fact that they are for the most part without cooties ought to be relief enough in itself? Let alone having to dodge only taxi cabs and bill-collectors instead of shells. Only of course we dont have to do that now, only shell-holes, and dodge them in a hurry to get one last look at the German army before it puts on its good old soup and fish—or whatever the German for civilized clothing is, that is if they have any.

But you are right girlie, to boost the smokes. We'll need them for a long while yet. I know you have been obliged to keep your own from your Ma and what with not really caring for peppermints it has been hard all these years. But while her trapeese work stood alone in its day and no one on Broadway is more respected

at this writing and as a mother-in-law I have no complaint on her outside of her wearing my dress-pumps, this one time she is dead wrong. Soldiers are not always acrobats and they do need to smoke and your Ma will put herself in the small-time reform class if she dont look out. When I think of the stuff I seen up and down Broadway and elsewhere in my days which could be reformed and no one miss it, I get hot when I hear this talk about keeping the army pure. Take it or leave it, but the truth is the Huns has kept us pure alright—they sweat all the wickedness out of us running after them.

But to get back to the tobacco stuff. Dont let nothing hinder you from bothering everybody you see to send smokes. We'll use 'em up never fear! And if you was to be walking down the Avenue or mebbe Broadway sometime and a box in your hand and asking for Smoke Funds or something whichever way its done—and your Ma was to fight her way through the howling mob which would undoubtedly be surrounding you on account of course the best known parlor-dancing act in America and the world wouldn't walk out looking for funds and not draw a mob which was

only too glad to see you for five cents in the smoke-fund-box instead of two dollars in the box office—well, anyways, if your Ma was to force her way through this mob which with her weight she could do easily, why she would forgive you in the end if not right there on the street, and I believe that a hand-organ would start and play hearts and flowers at that.

Anyways, keep up the good work only never mind the monograms as long as they taste like tobacco and can be lit. And if you fall out with Ma just tell her this story which I will tell you and she will see mebbe God didn't put tobacco in the world merely for little slum children to pluck on their two weeks vacation in all its green beauty.

Well, the story is like this sweetie, and I will write it as good as I can and if it seems comicle go ahead and get a good laugh only take it or leave it, it was no comedy at the time. But if you was to news it around mebbe the folks at home would start dropping something beside coppers in them soda-fountain boxes you was talking about, and commence trying to squeeze a quarter through the slot now and again. Come to think of it, the biggest thing a copper penny can buy is the feeling a per-

son gets from dropping one in a Belgium milk bottle or home for crippled children or Merry Xmas for the Salvation Army. You know the cheap chest it gives you. Many a liberty bond has been left in the Govts. hands by a prospective buyer stumbling on a "drop a penny" box in a cigar store on his way to the cupon-cutters, or I miss my guess. I've done the same in my day and the man who says he aint raised his own stock with himself by giving a nickle to the Newsboys Annual Outing is as big a liar as the guy which says he never loved another girl. And if pennies was to be cut out of the currency a whole lot of cheap philanthropists would have to make thier concience work or fight.

Well, anyways you go right on boosting the smoke-fund and never mind Ma. She'll learn different some day.

Now about this story I was going to tell you. First off leave me explain that the drinking regulations over here is different to uniforms than on the Rialto and America. I hunch it that the managers and booking agents and so forth in the U. S. Military Amusements Co. inc. figure that a few of the rules have to be let down while the big show is on. Same as the

stars can lean against a No Smoking sign on the big time and roll a makin's quite openly. So when on leave and even sometimes in the dressing-room or I should say rest-billetts a bottle of wine is not out of order. Very different sweetie, from the night Goldringer gave me in my uniform the big send off at the Ritz with all the newspaper bird and the leads and everybody and me and you the only sober person present, do you remember?

Well, its no news to you to say that I havent forgot I am a proffessional dancer and good condition is my middle name for my future, not to mention my present contract with Uncle Sam and that a sober man is worth more to both—also to you and myself.

But the Allies dont look on liquor like we do. As a matter of fact they seldom look on what we would call liquor at all, hardly ever getting a glympse of anything hard such as rye, scotch or gin, and a cocktail being practically a stranger and a repulsive one at that to them. But wine is something different again. Which while with us it is the high sign for a big party and flowing only in extremely good classes such as at the lobster layouts—leaving aside dago spagetti parlors when folks is rest-

ing—with them it is a common matter and everybody drinks it and while there aint much kick to it, still it has it all over the water we get and coming under their idea of nessesities, is low in price. Of course by wine I do not mean champagne like we used to for publicity purposes order for our dinner in public, but stuff made out of common grapes, I guess, and with the seltzer left out.

Well, dearie, the reason I hand you all this info. is that the story I am going to tell you got started because of this wine. "In Venus Veritas" you know or so they say, and I confess that in trying to get a little kick out of the stuff I got sort of lit and that's what caused me the story.

II

Well, we was sort of waiting off stage as you might call it, in a little town in Belgium, our act having just been on and a pretty lively one it was and the Captain give us a pretty good hand on it, although as you know the audience didn't wait for the finish but left us their orchestra seats or front line trenches which we moved into and then give up to the next num-

ber on the bill and come back to watch from the wings, or would of only we was a little too far off.

Well, the Capt. felt so good and the water was so bad that he sent a delegation back for a little liquid refreshment. They have big jugs over here like the molasses is kept in at home only here it is frankly boose and no one pretends any different. And the game is this. The one which volunteers for this dangerous work, if broke himself, takes a swig or so out of the jug he is bringing back which it dont show on account of their not being transparent and so the officer dont get any surprise until toward the end of the jug and even so may think he took more than he had thought. The private will take only a little from each but if there is jugs enough many a mickle makes quite a jag.

Well, me and a fellow named McFarland and a French kid called Ceasare was each given two of these molasses jugs which looked like props, and was sent off to a village some place in congnito for you couldn't pronounce it. And we was glad enough to go because among other things we was short of smokes. Some cleaver actor had accidintly lit the last mess

fire with a bale of Virginias and there wasnt hardly a smoke among us.

You just figure out how it would feel if you was to have a bath and do your exercise and eat a swell breakfast and then realise there wasnt a pill in the house! Think sweetie, how your brest would swell up with alarm, and the royal fit you would throw while the elevator boy was on his way to the corner drug store! Why figure even the way you feel once you get a cigarette in your face and then cant find a match for two whole minutes. Well, take it or leave it, I tell you that feeling is a whole lot multiplied on the victorious fields of France when little friend cigarette is notable by its absence. A empty house on an opening night is nothing to it. So you can see where me and Ceasare and Mac was glad to get in the neighborhood of one, leaving even all considerations of the wine aside.

Well, we started out carrying each two jugs and as we went the fellow which acts as usher, or sentry on the road hollers at us do we know the way and Ceasare and him jabbered at each other in French in the remarkable fluent way they do over here. And Ceasare laughed and when we asked what it was he said the guy

told him to look out Fritz didnt get us on the open road, which was certainly some joke for of course we hadn't been able to get near enough to Fritz to hear him in some time. So we laughed, too, for if any snipers had managed to stay behind and opened up on us we could of spotted them and wiped them out if they had kept it up.

Well sweetie, there wasnt any road exactly toward the place we was bound for on account of our having done considerable trespassing on private property and taking little notice of fences whether barbed-wire or civilian or shell-holes or trenches but having went straight ahead. And after the last 5 years on upper Broadway you will realize it comes easy enough to me, I often having come unharmed from the Claridge to the Astor, and the French fields has nothing on that crossing. So to me that first part of the trip was as little or nothing and I was the cheerfulist of the party though we was all pretty cheerful and singing a little song of Ceasare's which I dont know what it means but I guess I'd better not write it in for fear you would.

Well, it was late afternoon and awful cold for the time of year, and I was thinking that

at home the frost was on the pumpkin and the pumpkin would soon be in the pie and the turkey was about to get the axe and Halloween was due and a lot of nice things like that. And after a lot of kilomets had been covered, we come to the funny little town which looked like the back-drop to the opening seane in a musical comedy only all shot to pieces like it had been on the road with a No. 2 company for a long and successful tower.

Well, we come to it, anyhow, and being on duty in a way as far as them jugs went—we went with them and took what we could afford our ownselves while we watched papa Ceasare fill 'em up. Then the tobacco dept. claimed our attention only to find there wasn't any!

Well, sweetie, I have tried to put over the way I felt at these glad tidings and the censor wouldn't of stood for it, so out she goes! But I felt that way all right and so did Mac and Ceasare.

"I'll no beleeve ut!" says Mack which he talks a funny kind of way like Harry Lauder. "I'll no beleeve ut—theer must be some someplace aboot!"

"Say la guyer!" says Ceasare and gives a shrug, although he was a lot more disappointed

than Mac on account of Mac's really caring more for liquor than smoke any day. "Say la Guyer!" he says, and asks his pa why it happened and his pa tells him and he translates it to Mac and me.

"He say a young lady have took it all only hour ago for free to soldiers," he explains.

And take it or leave it, but I was certainly a little sore for although I am the first to believe in the other fellow getting it, still this time we all felt like the other fellow was us, and no doubt she had took it to the nearest camp or hut, and so I ast which way was it she went for mebbe we would get some of it. And then come a big surprise.

"No 'ospitil here!" Ceasare explained again. "An no 'ut! It ees too soon after we take it. Then papa says she is first cross red lady we have seen and she speak in French!"

"Well, that's funny!" I says—and of course dearie you understand this had been enemy ground only a little before and that there was a wine-shop going was a miricle and only for it being Ceasare's papa we wouldn't of got none, which is how he come to be along with us.

Well, we all felt real sore and disappointed but took it like a man for of course a red cross

nurse would get it for the wounded and we had our health.

So papa give us all another round and we took the big molasses jugs and started off. It was getting toward twilight and pretty cold and I will say it give me sort of sore feeling towards the folks at home and blamed the a for letting me be without a cigarette and you know how it is about two drinks makes me a little sore at things and I began to cheer up after the third and this was early in the evening.

Not so Mac He has a talent for drink. Well, we had just about left the motion-picture village behind us when he commenced to sing and while I dont know what it was about, I will put it down this time because you wont know neither.

"Fortune if thou'll but gie me still
Hale Breeks, a scone, an' whisky gill,
An' rowth o' ryme to rave at will,
Tak' a' the rest,

"An' deal 't about as they blind skill
Directss thee best."

Well, naturally we applauded which is always safe when you don't understand a

thing, and it certainly was comical for Mac is generally a quiet cuss and a tightwad as well. Then I spoke up.

"These jugs is too heavy!" I says. "Let's lighten 'em up a bit."

Well they thought so and we done it and felt better and then I sang them:

"Give me your love
The sunshine of your eyes!"

And both Ceasare and Mac commeneed to cry. Mac set down his jugs and we done the sa e and then Mac done the most generous thing I ever seen a Scotchman do even in liquor. He reached inside his bonnett and took out three cigarettes, shook the bonnett to show they was actually the last, and give us each one and one to himself.

Well, we all sat down on a old motor chassis or what was left of it, and burned them smokes like insense, not speaking a word! But putting that red cross lady which had been ahead of us out of our minds and thinking only of how we was going to give Mac our next packages from home when they come, and he mebbe thinking of how he was going to get

them. And then we all made our jugs a little lighter and by this time it was pretty dark and we commenced to hurry back. Before we had went very far we had to hesitate about which way. Because sweetie, take it or leave it, what you write about getting lost in the new subway has nothing on finding your way about after dark by yourself in this part of the world.

Well, Mae was sure we come one way and I was sure we come another and Ceasare he had a different hunch from either of us. So we all took another little drink as it was getting mighty cold by now, and in the end we started off Ceasare's way because why wouldnt he know best which way was right and him born and raised right there on the farm? We trusted to his judgment just like him and Mae would of trusted me to tell the taxi-driver where to go from Keens.

So we went like he said, but somehow we didn't seem to get no place in particular although we kept on going for a long time: I couldn't say how long, but it seemed like a Battery to Harlem job to me only by now I loved everybody but Fritz and a sort of fog had come up or so I thought, and we was all

singing, each our own sweet songs but at the same time.

"Lets throw away a few of these jugs," I remember saying—and really there was so little in some of them it wasn't worth carrying back so we just finished them off and threw them away and then we come upon a little path —or it felt like it.

"Allou!" shouted Ceasare, "we are almost there!" and with that we sure got the surprise of our lifes, for rat-tat-tat-tat-tat come a sputter of machine gun fire right at us.

III

At first we was very much jolted by this though unhurt, and then we commenced to think it was a joke. Here we was going in behind our own lines and being fired upon.

"Shut up, ye dam fools!" Mac hollered. "Can ye no recognize yer own people?"

Then Ceasare yelled in French, but they paid no attention to us. *Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat!* it come again, and this time it made me real mad. I figured that if they didn't quit their nonsense somebody was liable to get hurt. So I saved what was left in my last jug, threw

the thing away, and told Ceasare and Mac to come on and leave us beat up the poor boobs with the nasty sense of humor and show them where they got off. Well, Mac and him thought this was a good idea so they done like I done and we ran up the little hill which we could see our way pretty good in spite of the dark because they never let up on us but kept right on spitting fire. Well, we got very mad by this time and to tell the truth I can't very well recall just what did happen only when we got to the gun the boys was German!

Well, take it or leave it, I aint had a jolt like that since the night Goldringer raised our salary of his own accord after we put on the La Tour Trot. And I only wisht I could remember more about what happened. But for quite a few minutes I was terrible busy; and I guess I better admit I was tight—awful tight. Of course there was five of them and only three of us, and equally of course we licked them badly and took only one prisoner but not being anything for a lady to read I will not give particulars and anyways I dont remember any. Of course it was one of them few remaining nest of hornets which we had

joked about, but really hadn't believed was there.

Well, when it was all over but the cheering and we was sure these birds had been all by their lonesome, we was pretty well sobered and hot and everything. And the first thing we done was take a look around in a few places for tobacco. And take it or leave it—we didn't find any! Not a smoke among the lot! Watter you know about that?

But one good thing we got out of the scrap was our senses back and it was easy enough to spot about where our own lines would be. So after we figured it out, and taking Fritz, the one prisoner, along, we commenced to start off that way and you can bet the poor boob was glad to go with us. You would of thought he had wanted to be with us all the time. Just like after a election at home. Cant find anybody who didnt vote the winning ticket. Which joke you may not understand, sweetie, being a lady, and I will not now stop to explain.

Well, we started back alright and as we come, I got the story which I want to tell you which commenced really when we come to that old barn. Only I had to explain how we come to be there or you wouldnt get the idea

of what I am driving at for you to make your Ma understand.

Ever since I fell out of my airplane and was in the hospital and reenlisted the only place they'd take me back was in the infantry, I done a lot of thinking—and some of it stuff which might mebbe sound awful queer coming from me, especially after some of the language I have been known to use in my day, and while I hope I aint become mushy, I certainly do believe there is more to religion and such things than we have thought. Take it or leave it, mighty few fellows have lived through this war, far less fought through it, without getting religion of some kind out of it. I wonder can you get me? And make Ma get it too. So I'll tell what happened and you see if miricles is over yet or not for this is a true fact and not a story somebody told me.

Well, after we cleaned up that machine gun nest and had a cute little live German prisoner of our very own, we took him down the hill with us the best way we could in the dark and it full of holes and what not. There wasn't a bit of light—no moon nor stars nor nothing, and a wet sort ofsmell that made us wish for a smoke the way hardly nothing else is ever wished for,

except mebbe a motion-picture salary or a drink of water after a big night—not on the desert.

Well we got on pretty good because we was nearly sober now and Ceasare he knew where we was going, and this time he really did, and so we kept up pretty good. It commenced to rain a little and the big drops felt awful nice against my cheeks which was burning hot. Made me think of when I was a kid back in Topeka and digging out to school and a pair of red mittens I had which my mother had made them—good knitting and well made like the sweater I had on that very minute which she also knit. And I thought of me and you and our snow-sceane when we done that dance on the Small Time with the sleighbells on our heels—remember dear? Before we had really made good except with each other? And I thought about love too and a lot of fool stuff like that. And then I heard a funny sound for thereabouts. It was a woman moaning and crying.

Well, at first I thought mebbe I was crazy or imagined it, but Mac who was walking in front with our own little Fritz stopped short and so did Fritz and listened. It come again

—the most dismal thing you ever want to hear. I turned to Ceasare and he had heard it.

"Say drool," he says, which means "Its funny" only it wasnt and he didnt mean it that way, but the other way. You know.

"It sure is!" I says. "There she goes again!"

"I think theers a wee bit housie over theere!" says Mac.

"It is the barn of my cousin's uncle," says Ceasare. "We better go look."

So with that we started across the road to where sure enough was a funny little barn—stone with a grass roof—peculiar to these parts, I guess. The nearer we got the louder the noise was, but no words to it, only sobbing very low and despairing and sort of sick—and a female—no doubt of it. There wasn't any light nor anybody moving about as far as we could tell.

"Gee! What'll we do?" I says in a whisper. "We can't pass it up!"

"Naw—we mun tak' a look inside!" whispers Mac.

"Certinmount," says Ceasare; "Mais—be careful! We put the Boch in first and see if some trick is up!"

It being Ceasare's cousin's uncle's barn he

knew where the door was, and the three of us shoved Fritz up to it and made him understand he was to open it and go in ahead of the crew. We finally got it over with signs and shoves, because the bird didnt speak nothing but German and we hadnt a word of it among us. But still we made him do it and he did, and we pulled our guns and stood close behind and I stood closest and pulled not alone my gun but the little electric flashlight you sent me which I flashed in as quick as the door was opened.

IV

And take it or leave it—there was a woman with a baby in her arms! She was rather a young round-faced woman and that kid was awfully little and held close under a big dark cloak the woman wore. The poor soul looked tired out and she had no hat and her hair was all down. The inside of the barn was a wreck and the rain was coming in through a big shell-hole in the roof. She was all alone, we at once got that, and at sight of the German uniform which was all she seen at first, she give a shriek of joy and got up onto her feet.

"Got si danke!" she cried. "Ich habe——"

Then she seen the rest of us and shrunk back, covering the kid with her cloak. Fritz said something to her—quite a lot in a hurry, and evidently told her he was a prisoner, and now that she had spilled the beans, so was she. And of course even under the circumstances, she was. But take it or leave it, I certainly did feel queer when I went up to that lady with the little baby in that barn. For German or no German the situation was—well—it certainly got my goat. I took off my hat and made a bow.

"Lady," I commenced, "have no fear. Don't let us throw no scare into you. We ain't Huns—that is, I beg your pardon, but what I mean is you are perfectly safe and we will take care of you."

Well, the way she looked at me would of wrung a heart of stone. Her eyes was blue and she just stared at me as if I had hurt her—which of course was far from any mind there.

"Don't be scared," I says again. "You and the baby will get good care. Just come with us if you are able!"

When I spoke of the kid she give the poor little smothered thing a quick look and drew

her cloak around it closer. Gee! but she looked fierce! She had quit crying but not a word out of her!

"You try!" I says to Ceasare. "The poor thing mebbe understands French."

So Ceasare, who was as much shot to pieces at the sight as I was, come forward.

"Madame!" says he, bowing with his cap in his hand. Then he shoots a lot of French about restes, au sueeuoor, and stuff I know meant "cut the worry." But she didnt get it any better than she had my line of talk, and only kept on looking scared.

Well by this time Mac come out of his stupor; but there was no use trying Scotch on her, that was plain. So there was nothing to it except forward march. For one thing my torch wouldnt of lasted much longer and for another it sure was getting late.

"Does your cousin's uncle which owns the barn have a house anywheres near, where we could leave her?" I asked Ceasare.

"All dead in this town!" he says cheerfully. "And this is the only building left I think it!"

"Then there's nothing to do but take her along to headquarters," I says, and off we started, she not saying a word.

That was some trip! I want to tell you sweetie it was the worst part of the whole war to me. You know I got a heart and I felt just fierce for that poor little German mother. All the way in, while we was helping her along I kept wishing I knew how on earth she come to get in that place. She seemed real feeble at times and we lifted her across the worst places. I tried to get her to let me carry the baby, but she held on to it like grim death and wouldnt leave any of us touch it—and it was so quiet I commenced to get scared.

"More than likely its dead!" I whispered to Ceasare and he thought so too.

Before we got in, we had carried her almost a mile, taking turns with her on our crossed hands, and the odd feller guarding our Hun. And then we came to the end of about the very worst and longest hike I ever took including the time the Queen of the Island Company got stranded in New Rochelle. The sentry across that mud hole of a slushy road was the welcomest sight in the world.

"Wot the 'ell yer got?" he says when he recognized us.

"One Gentleman Hun prisoner and one lady ditto in very bad shape!" I says.

"Wot the 'ell!" he says again. And then he passed us and we reported.

Say sweetie, take it or leave it, but I had honest clean forgot all about that wine which we had been sent for in the first place. I tell you I was so worried about that poor woman! And it was not until the five of us was standing in Capt. Haskell's quarters with the light from his ceiling glaring at us and him also glaring from behind his mustache, that I even commenced to remember it. But I had to report so I reported for the bunch of us and in strict detail as good as I could remember. All this while the woman sat in a chair, her face like a stone, and my heart just aching for her.

Well, when I got through taking the most nervous curtin-call of my life—and take it or leave it, if the German army would ever of been as nervous as I was then, the war would of ended that minute. Capt. Haskell beckoned to the lady.

"Come here, please!" he says very kind. "And let me see the baby!"

She got up and went over very softly. Then she stood in front of him and commenced to laugh and laugh.

"Pigs of Americans!" she said. "Fools to

carry me! That's not a baby—its twenty cartons of cigarettes!"

Then she threw back her cloak and under it there she was dressed in Red Cross uniform.

"I disguised myself and went to the village!" she went on in perfectly good English. "And I bought all the tobacco there.

"On my way back to my own lines I was fool enough to lose my way and to cry over it! That is all!"

And its enough, aint it dear? For you do get me, dont you? Them twenty cartons of cigarettes was a miricle to us and the one we needed the most of any right at that moment. Eh, what? as the English say. And her taking such a chance to get them for Fritz shows how bad off the German army must be, don't it? And so tell this to your Ma and get her to quit that foolish anti-smoke society she's forming—because its the bunk—and I am ever your loving life and dancing partner,

JIM.

P. S. Just got your letter. That certainly is a good one on Ma. Smoking a pipe! And if you hadnt opened the door so sudden you'd never in this world of caught her. And if she does claim her grandmother did it too, all you

got to say is so did many a soldier's grandmother.

P. S. No. 2. I forgot to say that a French General has given us a kiss on both cheeks and a medel for that job. And its the first time I ever got anything but a headache by going on a party.

IV

ANYTHING ONCE

I

Aint it funny the things that comes into a person's head when they are rubbing cold cream onto their nose? All sorts of stuff, some of it good sense and some of it the bunk. But most of it pretty near O.K. If some one was to take down the ideas I get at such a sacred hour, I'd be out of the dancing game and into the highbrow class just as quick as the printer got through his job.

It sure is a time when a woman's true thoughts come to the surface along with the dust and last night's make-up, and many a big resolve has been made owing to that cleanly habit. Wasn't there some wise bird made up a quotation about cleanliness being next to God knows what? Well, believe you me, its the truth, for once a woman starts in with the cold cream all alone,—and she sure does it at

no other time—there is no telling what will come of it beside a clean pink face.

With me personally myself, thats where most of my ideas about life come from—right out of the cold cream tube! And while indulging in this well known womanly occupation the other evening I commenced thinking about rest and how important it is for us Americans—and of the way we go after it—like it was something we had to catch and catch quick or it would get away from us. Do you get me? If not, leave me tell you what a friend of mine, which has just been mustard out of the service says to me, when I was checking up his experiences abroad while he was checking up what the waiter had put down.

"My idea of rest?" he says. "Why taking Belleau Woods after three restless weeks in the trenches," he says.

Which sort of puts the nut in the shell, as the saying is. And also at the same time reminds me of the rest I just recently took.

Not that I generally need one any more than any other thoroughly successful star, for heavens knows the best known parlor dancing act in the world and Broadway, which mine undoubtedly is, dont need to rest because the man-

agers theirselves always come after me and resting I leave to the booking-agency hounds. But this time it was bonea fido, and come about in a sort of odd way.

To commence at the start it begun with me falling for the movies, which Gawd knows I only done it for the money, their being no art in it, and they having hounded me into them for a special fillum. And of course many well known girls like Mary Garden and Nazimova go into pictures and even myself, but its simply because of being hounded, as I say. But once in you earn your money, believe you me, and I have stood around waiting for the sun like Moses, or whoever it was, until my feet nearly froze to the pallasades before jumping off, only of course it was a dummy they threw after I had made the original motions of the leap to death. And the worst part is once you are signed up on one of these "payment to be made wheather the party of the first part (thats me) is working or not" you got to do like they say, and a whole lot of the "not working" means plain standing around waiting for the director or the camera-man or the rain to quit, and what us public favorites suffers when

on the job is enough to make the photographer's Favorite of Grainger, Wyo., abandon the career she might of had in favour of domestic service or something like that where she'd get a little time to herself.

Well anyways my judgment having slipped to the extent of having signed my sense of humor away for six months at twenty-two hundred a week, I was in the very middle of a fillum called the Bridge to Berlin when one day, just as a big brute of a German officer by the name of O'Flarety had me by the throat in a French chateau, the studio manager comes in and says the armistice is signed and the war is over, and we was to quit as who would release a war fillum now and we was to start on something entirely different, only he didn't know what the hell it was to be and here was eight thousand feet wasted—and believe you me I was sore myself for we had shot that strangling sceene six times by then and my marcelle wave was completely ruined by it, and I would of liked to of had something to show for it.

But anyways, orders was to quit and so me and Ma and the two fool dogs and Musette left the wilds of Jersey and after a stormy voy-

age across the Hudson come safely home to our modest little apartment on the drive, there to not work at 22 hundred a week until Goldringer got the studio manager to get the scenario editor to get me a new story, which at the price was not of long duration for while Gawd knows they dont care how long a person stands around waiting to be shot, they just naturally hate to pay you for doing the same thing at home in comfort.

Well anyways the bunk that scenario editor picked out was something fierce. I wouldn't of been screened dead in it. But it just happened I had a idea for a scenario myself, which come about through somebody having give me a book for Christmas and one night, the boy having forgot to bring the papers, I read it. And was it a cute book? It was! I had a real good cry over it, and while it wasn't exactly a book for a dancer, I could see that there was good stuff in it. So finally I e and Ma stopped into Goldringer's office after he had twice telephoned for me and handed him a little surprise along with the volume.

"I got a idea for a picture, Al," I says, "and here's the book of it."

"Well Miss La Tour, what's the name of it

and idea?" says he, chewing on his cigar strong and not even looking at the book but throwing it to the stenographer, which is a general rule always in the picture game and one reason we don't see such a crowd of swell fillums.

"The name is Oliver Twist," I says. "It's a juvinile lead the way it stands, but I want it fixed up a little, with me as Olivette Twist—the editor can fix it so's that will be all right. It's really a swell part. I could wear boy's clothes some of the time."

"Huh! Olivette Twist," says Goldringer, taking back the book and looking at the cover of it. "Always thought it was a breakfast food! But if you say its O.K. we'd better get it. Where is this feller Dickens? We'll wire him for the rights. Friend of yours?"

You see, if anybody brings scenarios personally, a star in particular, it's generally a friends.

"No," I says. "It was sent me by Jim along with a letter which shows the bird is well known," I says. "And is in Westminister Abby, London, England, which Jim says proves his class.

"Must be a swell apartment," says Goldringer. "All right we'll send a cable to him

and see if the picture rights is gone or not. If the boy is so well known he may stick out for a big price. This is Thursday. We may hear from him by Monday or Tuesday, and we'll get a scenario ready anyways so's we can begin to shoot not later than a week from to-day. Until then," he says, "run along and amuse yourself and dont do anything I wouldnt."

Well, me and Ma was shown out then and down on Broadway Ma see some salt-water taffy in a drug-store and wanted to go in and by it which I had to prevent because outside of Ma being in no need of nourishment, she weighing considerable over the heavy-weight requirements already and Gawd knows if she was to have went back into the circus it would no longer be on the trapeese and a certain party in the side-show would have a strong competitor for her job and it wouldn't be the human skeleton either. But leaving off the consideration how would it look for us to go up the Ave. in my new wine-colored limousine which I earned myself and no one can say different with truth—and eating stuff like that out of a folded paper box? Ma certainly has my health well in hand and heart and its seldom we quarrel over any little thing, but she cer-

tainly has no class instinct, or instinct for class —do you get me? And when I try to make her see that them little refinements is what makes me the big success I am, she sometimes kicks and if its hunger, its got to be met immediately if not one way, why then another. So in lieu, as the poet says, of the taffy I had to take her to the Ritz and watch her put away 6 vanillia eclairs at two bits each and a quart of cocoa, not that I begrudge the money, only believe you me the way all hotels charge nowadays is rapidly making Bolshivik out of even we capatalists. Do you get me? You do! But of course in my line you got to keep before the public in the right way.

Well anyways Ma complained over the loss of that taffy the whole way through the six eclairs, which it was certainly a little hard on me to have to sit there and watch her while for professional reasons eating only one of these tomato surprises which never surprise but the once, on my figures account, and certainly its a fact that the two of us was doing the next best thing to what we wanted instead of the thing itself which is one of the prices of success. So, as is also often the case at such times, I was a little mean to Ma on account

of having been mean already—do you get me?

"Mamma" I says. "You certainly are getting heavier. It's a crime for you to wear these narrow skirts!"

Ma give me a searching look the same as used to lead up to caster oil when I was a kid, and then took the half of a eclair at one bit before replying.

"Now Mary Gilligan you needn't take out your artistic temperament or any other ailment on me!" she says as firmly as the eclair would permit. "Just because Jim is in France yet, and your moleskin dolman was a failure and you aint been occupied daily for a week or more, and slipped up on doing your setting up exercises this morning which I wouldnt of mentioned only you started it," she says. "Its no excuse for picking on me," she says. "What if I am a little plump? My Gawd aint I earned the right to be? What with three kids and your Pa to bring up and the center trapeese in the circus right through it all except when absolutely necessary? You dont know what a woman *can* go through!"

"Dont I, just!" I snapped for my Gawd aint it the truth every woman has the very worst troubles that any woman ever had? And she

sure gets sore when another woman sets up to go them one better!

"No you don't!" retorts Ma with that maddening air of being older than me which she uses to squelch me every time she cant get me any other way. "No you dont!" she says. "You never brought up three kids without a nurse girl while on the trapeese—you never brought up a thing but two fool dogs and you even leave them to the carelessness of a personal maid," she says. "Poor dears, Gawd knows what will become of their little canine minds and morals!"

"Now Ma!" I begged, because she aughter know that is a sore point with me and not intention, and she had me on the raw.

"Well then!" she says. "You got a swell job and no troubles only mabe a sluggish liver and you aint the only woman in America which Gen. Pershing cant yet spare the husband of," she says. "And mabe I do need to reduce a little," which was her way of apologizing. And just as this lull occurred who should come into sight but Maison Rosabelle, her which runs the shop where myself and all the most chic professionals gets their clothes. She was all dressed up like a plush horse with real sables,

part of which must of come off them simple refined little gowns I had made for the Bridge to Berlin that was ruined by the armistice. Her hair had just been rehennered and her face was as fresh as a tea-rose straight from the fragrent facial massage. She smiled and sailed down on the two of us which we welcomed with the usual relief of a family quarreling when neither sees the way to win out and have got to go on living together. In other words she automatically buried the hatchet for us, as the school books say.

"So pleased to of run into you, dearies!" she says. "For I'm goin' to Atlantic City tomorrow for a little rest."

No sooner was them words out from between her lip-rouge than I see a vision of salt-water taffy arising in Ma's eyes. Believe you me Ma is certainly hard to pry loose from anything she has once set her mind on! And Maison had to continue in that cordial manner.

"Why dont you run down for a few days?" she says. "It'll do you good. You're looking kinda pulled down Mrs. Gilligan!" she says—and of course Ma fell for that.

"I do feel a little low!" she says, finishing off her cocoa. "And Mary—Marie here is

waiting until they get a answer to a cable which was sent to England by the studio. I understand we may have quite a wait, so I really believe we might go along."

II

Now as I looked at Ma it come over me that mabe she had the right dope. When people that live together, especially if not friends, but relations, commence to get a little on each others nerves, going away on a trip is good for what ails them. The only trouble is that in the case of females they generally go together. Still, with the whole bunch of new and different stuff it gives them to fight over—R.R. tickets, and who wired for these horrid rooms, and I told you to bring a heavier coat, and etc., they generally get straightened out quite a lot. Even the idea of going along with Maison didnt worry me then, I having been on tower many a time when the No. 1 Company went out and Ma the same for years, and we generally speak, even to the publicity man, no matter if we have made Rochester, Buffalo and Chicago in a quick jump playing matinées as well. So I am without the wholesome and well

founded fear of taking a pleasure-trip with friends which is the bitter fruit of most persons experience of the same. Besides, I sort of like Maison, which of course her real name is Maisie Brady, and her funny little husband, which is also still in France, she not being dependant any more than myself nor would she hold him back from serving his country only I dont hardly believe she urged him to go for quite the patriotic reasons I did, he having been a traveling man and so when he retired on her income she didnt feel as natural and affectionate and homelike and all that as when he was away most of the time. But at any rate I and she were both war-widows and old friends from the time her mother was lady-lion tamer and mine on the trapeese, and so in spite of the bills she charges me she has more refinement than most people and so I says all right, we'll go to Atlantic City and we'll be on the one twenty train to-morrow.

"Thats sweet, dearie!" says Maison. "We'll get a swell rest!"

Then she set sail and was off with a Jewish gentleman friend, which had been waiting at the entrance all this time with a gardenia in his buttonhole. And Ma and me called for

the check and dogs and limousine and hitched our way homeward through the traffic to our quiet little apartment with 7 windows with the beautiful outlook of the river and the R.R. tracks and etc.

Then while Musette packed only three trunks and my gold-fitted dressing case and a couple of hat boxes and my specially designed jewellery box and the travelling hamper for the dogs, we having decided to travel light and probably not stay over three or four days, Ma went into the all-tiled kitchen and commenced getting up a little smack of cold beef and potato salad and fried cheese sandwiches and coffee and a few hot biscuits and honey so's we wouldn't have to go out and eat, which Ma certainly loves to do and no cook ever stands it for more than a week and the current cook's week was up that morning before we went downtown.

Well anyway while she was doing this I went into the drawing-room which is all fitted up in handsome gold furniture—that the dealer said was one of the Louis periods. Louis Cohen I guess,—I never remember quite. And to put a record on the phonograph in the case I had especially built in the same style at fifty

dollars extra and all the instalments paid, and streached out as good as I could manage to on the chaise loung, which is a sort of house-broken steamer-chair, and while John Macormik's own voice sang my little grey home in the west to me in the privacy of my own home, I thought dreamingly about Jim and how much I was missing him and how swell we danced together and how kind and loving and brave he was and how refined, and believe me he's about the only theatrical male that don't murder a dress suit, and how horrible it was to be seperated from him after being married only two weeks and what fools we was to have danced together in every first-class theatre in America and only got married so recent, for if only we'd been married sooner mabe the pain of seperation wouldnt of been so great by now. Who knows? And believe you me it was some pain, and I had myself crying before I knew it. For I sure am stuck on that poor simp and my only war-work aint been done on the screene, Gawd knows, when I give him up to whatever the Allies was fighting for, which if it dont turn out to be as represented, believe you me, myself and a whole lot of other girls is going to want to know why!!

Well anyways, before Ma had the biscuits baked and I had run jada jada and sing me to sleep, I was wild to get away to the pure country ocean air and some healthy outdoor exercise which would help me forget my loneliness. And a lot of quiet and rest and sleep, with the ocean pounding me to the pillow and all that.

I had only a sort of twenty minute small time sketch of a idea of what Atlantic City was like on account of me having been there for openings only and getting in at four forty five with the show beginning at eight fifteen and the washup you need after the trip and Ma always insisting on me doing a twenty minute practice in my room and underwear before every opening which is perfectly correct and one of the principal things which has made my handsprings what they are, and getting dinner far enough in advance to do the handsprings in time. I knew little nor nothing of what Jim calls the Coney Island that went to finishing school except that there is swimming and horseback riding and a boardwalk that any one without French heels to catch in the cracks can have a elegant walk on. What little sniff of air I had outside the theatre and my

bedroom at the hotel give me a appatite for more, which up to now I never had the opportunity to get because of always being with a high-class show that went right back to N.Y. Sunday to open on Broadway. But now I was going like a regular American lady citizen to rest and get full of health and do as the regular resorters did. And I was glad. I was so anxious to keep myself in a pure atmosphere for Jim's sake and the studio wasn't exactly the farm—do you get me? You do! And a rest in the country was the very thing. I got quite excited thinking about it; dried my tears, stopped the phonograph and made sure that Musette put in my riding suit, bathing ditto, and walking boots. And when this was done I felt better already as the saying is, and fully able to take some of the nourishment Ma had got up.

The minute we set down to the table I see that she had also been making good resolutions and waited till she got ready to confess. It come after the seventh tea-biscuit and honey. On her part I mean, I only taking coldmeat and salad and things I dont like much, for reasons before stated.

"Mary Gilligan!" she says. "I believe I'm

getting heavier," she says, just as if it occurred to her for the first time. "And I have decided that while I am away to Atlantic City I wont eat to amount to anything and reduce in other ways the whole time I'm there!"

"You dont say," I says, without batting an eye. "Do you really think you need to?"

"I do!" she says. "This is my last real meal. And you needn't try to persuade me out of it."

I didn't. And next morning right after breakfast we caught the one twenty, hats, dogs, Musette, and all, and met up with Maison Rosabelle, which was dressed in a simple little trotters costume of chiffon and ermine which looked like it had been made in Babylon. I mean B.C. not L.I. And with her was a little surprise in the way of the same Jewish gentleman, Mr. Freddy Mayer, with another gardenia on him and a fine line of plausable explinations.

"Aint it a co-co-strange, Freddy just happens to be going our way!" cooed Maisie with all the innocence of a N.Y. livery-stable pidgeon.

"Yes, I'm taking a special offering of champagne to a special friend in the hotel business there," says Mr. Freddy. "And with three

such beautiful lady companions its no hardship to leave Manhattan behind nor the Bronx," says he gaily. "Altho when we come back we may find the Aldermen has decided to change both names after July first," says the humorous dog.

"Will you please kindly open this window a little?" I intrupped him. "The air in here aint so good as it was."

I dont know did this get over, but believe you me I didn't care for that well washed young wine-seller at all, nor for his company. And it was a relief when he done as I asked and him and Maison found their seats was at the other end of the car. In a way I can understand her liking traveling-men but not up to the point of traveling with one, even by semi-accident. And so opening the Motion Picture Gazette to look at the double-page spread of myself "Who has at length been lured by the artistic possibilities of the picture world," and keeping a eye on Ma to see would she stop the candy-boy, settled down to the soothing sound of Maison's laugh, and begun my quiet little trip to Healthland.

There is a large variaty of ladies which have husbands still in the army, but believe you me

they certainly got one thing in common, or else no looks at all. And that is, the temptation to take up with other company to some degree. Because of course while the war was holding the stage a husband's absence could be stood, but what with this peace-hyphen in the fighting and everything, you cant help but commence wondering what kind of a girl is detaining him over there and feel inclined to have a understudy kind of waiting off stage in self defence. For believe you me, there seems to be something sort of attractive about a war-widow and the ones which ignores the fact and minds their own affairs is the real patriotic women of America.

Not that I want to say a word about Maison, and what happened to me after the end of that train ride on which I was sitting so superior-minded, taught me a lesson; because its a cinch to be good when you want to be. A person which has suffered themselves is slow to bawl out the other fellow so quick next time. Do you get me? Not yet.

Well, after we had rolled by the lovely scenery and read the handsome ad. signs on either hand, not to mention the pipe-line, and got the invigorating smell of low tide in our

eager nostrils, we come out on that quiet little country railroad station platform, our destination, to be greeted by only several hundred busses and a thousand or so taxi-cabs, each yelling at the top of their voices. As we got off the train Maison rushes up to us and pipes a cheering little question.

"Where are we going, dearie?" she said, blithly.

"Where are we going?" I says. "Maison Rosabelle, do you mean to say you didn't wire no place for rooms?"

"Why no!" says Maison. "Didn't you?"

"Certainly not!" I says. "I never wired for rooms in my whole life. The advance agent always done that for me."

"Well Mary Gilligan, I'm not your advance agent!" she snapped, and then she kind of looked at Mr. Freddy in a sweet, helpless womanly fashion expecting him to fork up a little help. But it seems Mr. Freddy was one of these birds that only think to take care of his own comfort. He had a room alright alright at the Traymore. And he meant to keep it!

"We'll take the bus to there," he suggested. "I'm sure there'll be lots of room."

But no bus for me on account of professional reasons. So we took one taxi for him and us and another for Musette and the dogs and the bags, and then commenced a round of seeking for shelter as the poet says, which had the "Two Orphans" skun a mile. We went to six hotels and not a room among them. Believe you me, there is just one person can make you feel cheaper than a Atlantic City hotel clerk when he says "No reservations?" and lifts his arched brows, and that is the head waiter when he says "nothing to drink?" and you say "yes, nothing!" Well, thank Gawd thats one thing prohibition will prohibit.

Well anyways, we tried six hotels until at last we come to a little place where the young feller at the desk give his reluctant consent to our admission. It was a simple little place done quitely in red plush and gold and marble columns, very restful with not over a hundred people sitting about in the lobby, listning not to the sad sea waves but to a jazz orchestra and inhaling the nice fresh tobacco smoke of which the air was full.

Well, Mr. Freddy give a gasp of relief and bid us good-by, after dating up Maisie for dinner, and a flock of bell-hops hopped upon our

stuff and we commenced a walking tower to our rooms. As we started off down the Alley-way, Maison give me a nudge.

"Look it, that sweet young officer! Aint he handsome?" she whispers only just loud enough for him to hear. And before I thought I turned my head and he certainly was easy to look at. He looked, in fact like a cross between a clothing ad. and a leading juvinille with a touch of bear-cat in him to make a regular he-man out of him. He was a captain, although so young, and had a cute little moustache and had that blue-blooded air—you know—like a Boston accent even without hearing him speak. And he was sitting all alone under a big poster advertising a entertainment for the benefit of blind soldiers or something. Of course I didn't notice him at all, because I being a perfect lady I dont do them things. But I couldnt help seeing that he didn't blush at what Maisie said, although I knew he heard it, but a sort of crinkly expression come up round his nice blue eyes as if he thought us comic or something. It made me just boil because my clothes is nothing if not refined and I never wear anything but a little powder on my nose when off the stage, and if its one thing

gets my goat it is to be taken for a show-girl which undoubtedly he thought the two of us was and they not in his class, for even with the passing glance I had taken I could see he was used to the Vanderbilts and all that set and had never had to be taught to take his daily tub. Do you get me?

So I walked like I hadnt looked, and of course I really hadnt, and proceeded to the before the war section of the hotel and the handsome suite all fitted in real varnished pine and carpets just like a Rochester boarding house when I was on the small time before I made my big success, and it made me feel quite at home or would of only for what I knew the difference in price was going to be. I guessed it just as soon as I heard Ma gasping over the hotel rules which she was reading. I went over and looked at them too, and at first I couldn't see nothing unusual about them. There was the usual bunk about the management not being responsible for the guest in any way, and Gawd knows how could they be and I dont blame them. And then, a little ways down I see what had got Ma stirred up. It seems dogs was ten dollars a week per each, and of course

we had two of them and Ma never has cared for my two, anyways.

"Well, I hope the sea air will be good for the poor little lambs," she says very sarcastic. "Mebbe it'll make 'em grow—into police-dogs or something useful!"

Well I see by this that the salt air had not yet got to Ma, although the troublesome journey had. And so I put on a simple little suit of English tweed and low heeled shoes and a walking hat, which seemed to me the right thing for the country, and went out to pry off a little health before dinner.

The outdoors was something grand. The air was as good a cocktail as a person would want, and the lights along the boardwalk was coming out like dandelion blossoms. There was hardly anybody around—just a few here and there and the surf of that wide and cruel ocean which Jim was the other side of, was breaking close to the rail in big white ostrich plumes. Overhead the sky was as clear and high as a circular drop with the violet lights on it, and a few clean stars was coming out. It was just cold enough to make a person want to walk fast until the blood got singing through you and you wanted to shout and run, only of

course no lady would. But just the same, I commenced to feel glad I hadnt died when I had the measles, and I loved everybody and had a great career before me and—and—oh that grand yearning happy feeling which comes out of being young and full of strength and a good bank-account. Do you get me? You do!

Well anyways, here I was walking like I had money on it and huming a tune to myself, when along comes a man the other way, walking two to my one, and huming the same tune, "How I hate to get up in the morning," it was. When he heard me and I heard him we both sort of half stopped out of surprise, and I got a good look at him. It was the young Captain from the hotel.

He also give a start of surprise when he seen me, showing he recognized me just as good as I did him. Only it was a real, genuine start, as if he realized something more than the fact he had seen me at the hotel. Then he smiled —a smile which would of done any dental ad. proud, and passed along, looking back over his shoulder—once. While I went along minding my own business and only know he looked back on account of my happening to look back to

see how far I had gone. I went a mile further and somehow that smile of his stuck in my mind and made me sort of happy for no reason, and at the same time awful extra lonesome for Jim. I made up my mind I would get Jim a new ear for a surprise when he come home and I would send him a extra box of eats this week and some of them cigarettes he likes so well, and a whole lot of stuff like that, the way a woman does at such a time. Do you get me? Probably.

Well anyways, I walked myself into a terrible enthusiasm over Jim, and then come back to the hotel. Which, by the way, its a strange thing how much further it is coming back to a Atlantic City hotel than walking away from it. And there at the door was Ma with the two dogs. A real strange sight for I never knew her to take them out before, and it looked like a guilty conscience, for she give me a peek out of the corner of her eye for some reason and then hastily explained how she had thought she'd take them herself this time instead of Musette. Well, we got rid of the dogs and then come down to dinner where Maison sailed down upon us all dressed up and no place to go, for it seems this Mr. Freddy had stood her

up on the dinner, having telephoned he'd be over later with a friend or two but business prevented him paying for her meal, or at least thats what I expect he meant. And Maison was wild. But she had to eat dinner with us, and register a bunch of complaints between bowing to friends and so forth.

"The luck I have!" she says. "That guy Freddy doesn't think any more of a nickle than he does of his right arm! And with all the conventions which is held at this town of course we would have to pick on the date the Baptist ministers was here! Its a fact! The clerk told me. And what is more if there ain't Ruby Roselle and Goldringer and will you look at that wine and it twelve a quart without the tax! Well, of all things!"

III

And there sure enough was Ruby across the room with Goldringer, which he evidently had come down to wait for the answer to that cable in the fresh air, and I suppose Ruby was a accident, the same as Freddy, for goodness knows, I wouldnt say a thing against her even behind her back—and a good deal could be said

behind what shows of it when in costume. But I wouldnt say it anyhow, because even if it was the truth that woman would sue a person for liabale if only to get her name in the paper. And if she happened to be taking dinner with Goldringer, Gawd knows, its a comparatively free country and he's her manager as well as mine and its a good thing to assume its only business whenever possible as thinking the best of people never hurt anybody yet.

Also across the room all by himself was that young Captain, and he looked over twice but of course I pretended it was the picture on the wall over his head which had took my eye. Altogether that strange dining room wasnt much more lonesome to us than the Ritz or Astor for tea would of been. But the most remarkable part of the meal was Ma. Because she didn't touch it! Actually, and it the American plan which would tempt one of these Aesthetics if for no other reason but that you have to pay for it anyway. And all she took was a piece of meat about the size of a dime and a leaf of salad.

"I'm going to stick by what I said if only because you said I wouldnt!" she says, look-

ing me square in the eye. "Diet is my middle name."

Well, I mentally give her until to-morrow on that but said nothing at the time. And we went out into the lounge where Mr. Freddy and three friends was already lounging and after they had joined us, Goldringer and Ruby did the same, and the drinks commenced to flow with that frantic haste like into a river at the edge of the ocean as the poet says, meaning because its near its finish. While I, never using any alcohol myself except to remove my make up, sat there flushed with Revo, and couldn't help noticing the way the Captain which he was still all alone, looked over at the menagerie, and it made me boil for how could I help that piker Freddy and his cheap friends and the rest, and believe you me there are many perfect ladies in pictures and on the stage, only the public dont often recognize them because they are swamped with a bunch of roughnecks which all are popularly supposed to be.

It was a big relief when the Captain got up and went away about nine, and left us to a endurance contest as to which could sit up the longest in that refreshing atmosphere of cigarette smoke and drinks and ten-dollar per-

fume with the sad sea waves beating vainly outside the carefully glass enclosed verandah until one o'clock—when I personally went to bed leaving them to their fate.

I give the telephone operator a terrible shock by leaving a call for seven thirty, and when it come I put on my riding suit which I had left from a dance called "The Call to Hounds" which Jim and me done at the Palace just before he enlisted, and went out into the keen morning air. And it was some air! Then I commenced to look around for horses but had great difficulty in finding the same, for it seems the Atlantic City horses dont get up any earlier than most of the visitors, and believe you me I and a few coons which were picking up scraps and so forth off the boardwalk, was the only birds in sight at that hour. Well anyways I walked along breathing in that sweet air at about fifty cents per breath by the hotel rates, but feeling pretty good in spite of it, when I actually found a place where the horses was up—or mabe they had been all night. I got a horse which looked considerable like a moth-eaten property one but could go pretty good and commeneed to ride gently along what seemed to be my private ocean,

when all of a sudden who would I see but the young Captain riding very good indeed. He come up to me on high and then tried to put on the brakes when he seen who it was, but the horse had its mind on something else and wouldnt, so he got by me but not without a "Good morning!" Which I thought fairly safe to smile at seeing we was so rapidly going in opposite directions. But it seems he must of spoke roughly to his steed for he come up behind me and spoke with just that grand refined Big-Time drawing-room act accent I knew by his little moustache he would have.

"I say! What luck!" he says. "You are Miss Marie LaTour, are you not?"

Was I sore? I was. Any lady would be and of course after the company he seen me in at the hotel what could I expect but to be picked up? But more particularly as he had my name and it with a good reputation, and no one can say different with truth, I simply had to show him where he got off.

"Sir!" I says, just like a play. "Sir! I do not know you. Please beat it at once!"

"I know, but really!" he begged, flashing that white smile. "I'm not trying to be impertenant—let me explain. . . ."

"Explain nothing!" I says very haughty. "I wont listen."

"But I'm not doing what you think!" he cries out. "Please wait until you hear. . . ."

"I've heard that 'please listen' stuff before," I says. "Good-by!"

And then I done the bravest act of my life, not being really acquainted with horses, especially Atlantic City ones. I give the horse a lash and off we went, I trying hard to give the impression of a good rider and not looking back because I dasn't with that animal headed for the steel pier full clip. But I heard the Captain's remarks, just the same.

"By jove, I'll *make* you listen to me—just for that!" he says. And I heard no more, for the bird which keeps the horses come out and rescued me just before we hit the pier and I got off and started for the hotel, boiling with rage. Me treated like a common chorus girl! Me, once the best known parlor dancing act in the world, and now even more so on the motion picture screen and a lady or dead! I wouldnt of looked at that guy again on a bet—I made up my mind right then and there to show him his mistake and that if my accent wasnt as good as his my morals was better and

no attempt on his part could get me to speak to him again.

Well in this state of mind I run into Ma, just before we reached the hotel which she was hurrying to just ahead of me, and believe you me I was sure surprised because I never knew her out so early although she generally is up by seven, but with her curlpapers still on and a kimona and thats different from coming out in public.

"I've been taking my exercise!" she says before I could speak. "And I'm glad to see you do the same," she says.

And I certainly had to hand it to her strength of mind because after being out so early and all she eat was only tea and dry toast for breakfast.

After which we stopped by the office and just before we got there I see the Captain give a note to the clerk and walk away. When we asked for mail that note was the first thing the clerk handed me.

"Captain Raymond just left this for you Miss LaTour," he says.

I didnt even open it.

"Kindly return it," I says, very dignified, giving it back, and looked over my other mail.

But no letter from my husband, which is always the way on a day a woman most needs one. So I went upstairs very low in my mind and sort of glad that even if Jim couldn't think to write there was others would be glad enough to if they was let. And then I went and got Maison out of bed which she was taking her breakfast in.

"You come down here for your health and look what you do to it!" I says, and made her go for a boardwalk which she held out for about half a hour and no wonder with the heels she wears, and then stopped me with a gasp.

"Dearie, you surely must be the one that put the hell in health," she says, "For heavens sakes leave us sit down."

Well we did, and in about five minutes along comes Mr. Freddy with a friend, Mr. Sternberg, and it was remarkable how quick Maison recovered her strength, with the result that we spent a quiet little morning and about fifty dollars of Mr. Sternberg's money on shooting-galleries and throwing rings and carousels and a Japanese auction and other restful seaside sports, and ended at a quiet little café simply done in paper roses and rubber palm trees where the drinks was only seventy-five cents

per each and I had to sit and watch them again, Ma having gone off to exercise and not appearing to want me along with her.

Well anyways I was sort of relieved over not having to eat lunch with Captain Raymond looking on back at the hotel, and was just thinking of it when who would come into that café but the Captain himself, alone except for another officer, a Lieutenant with his arm in a sling and caught sight of me the very minute he sat down.

Well of course I didnt look over at him but I couldnt help noticing he called a waiter and wrote a note on a piece of paper and that the waiter brought it over to me.

And Maison seen it too, and her gentleman friends the same, and did they kid me? They did! But I kept the bird which had brought the note over while I tore it in two without reading it and sent it back again that way and believe you me that got over, because I could see Captain Raymond turn red all the way across the noisy room.

Well I thought that had settled it and spent a mournful if busy afternoon in another café where there was lots of smoke and a Jazz band and dancing and Maison was real happy be-

cause she had finally got Mr. Freddy to spend a nickle and a half. But I was lower than ever in my mind thinking how much more often some soldiers seemed able to write than others.

Well, after we had taken a nice walk in the fresh air nearly three blocks long, I got back to the hotel to find that Goldringer was giving a party that night beginning with dinner and of course Ma and me was booked for it and no escape because of my contract with him. And it was some party and at twelve o'clock that night I dragged my weary bones down the corridor after the second day of my rest, feeling that I would pass out any minute. A person certainly does need their strength to enjoy a American health resort.

The next morning I didn't even attempt to get up for any wild west exhibit. I hadn't the pep for one thing and the Captain was another reason of course. And when I finally come down-stairs and see Ma eat practically nothing, I let her set off right away after breakfast without me for exercise was nothing in my life. I strolled around the lobby waiting for Maison Rosabelle according to her request and there I seen a big poster which I had noticed before, the one about the entertainment for the bene-

fit of blind soldiers which the Captain had been sitting under the first time I—he saw me, and I went over and read it and the entertainment was to come off that very night. And while I was reading it the second time the way a person does in a hotel lobby, up comes Captain Raymond and actually speaks right there where a sceane would of proved me no lady.

"Please, Miss LaTour!" he says. "It's so *important.*"

"Kindly do not force me to call for assistance," I says low and quiet. "You are a stranger to me."

"But you dont understand!" he says, flushing up red the attractive way he had for all he was so fresh.

"Indeed I do," I says. "I havent been in the theatrical world since three generations for nothing," I says. "Kindly go *away!*"

"If you would only listen for five minutes, I'd prove how mistaken you are!" he says. "Won't you give me a chance?"

"No!" I says.

"By Heavens, I'll make you!" he says, half laughing. "I've never seen anything so absurd! Why my dear lady. . . ."

Right then up comes Maison in a simple lit-

tle Xmas tree of a dress in green and gold and red, and I broke away and took her arm, and hurried her out through the front door, leaving the Captain staring after us and rather against Maison's will.

"Why didn't you introduce me, dearie?" she says. "I kind a thought you'd pick up that bird!"

"I didn't pick him up. I turned him down!" I snapped. But Maison kidded me the whole three hours while we was in the beauty-parlours getting waived and manicured.

IV

Then we had a nice wholesome little lunch lasting only three hours and comparatively quiet and by ourselves, seeing there was only Goldringer and Ruby Roselle and Maison and Freddy and O'Flaraty, our leading juvenile who had turned up, and Mr. Sternberger and a friend of Ma's which used to be in the circus with her, and Ma and myself. And all the way through I watched Ma kind of anxiously, for she only toyed with a little salad and passed up everything else. I was by this time really scared she would be haggard or something, but

she looked fine, and not a word of complaint out of her, only toward four o'clock she got kind of restless, and so did I, so we excused ourselves, and walked to the door together.

"You needn't come along with me, Mary Gilligan," she says. "I want to walk real fast."

I looked at her sort of surprised at that, but at the time the queerness didn't really sink in. And I was so wore out I was actually glad to let her go alone and personally, myself, I took one of those overgrown baby-carriages or rolling chairs which I thought a healthy young person like myself would never come to, and sank into it like the poor weary soul I was, and let the coon tuck me in like a six-months-old, and off we went as fast as a snail.

Well it was pleasanter than I had thought it would be and I got kind of drowsy and dreamy and somehow I couldnt help but think of Captain Raymond and how refined and nice he was and how my fame and beauty had captured him to the extent that it had almost made him forget to act like a gentleman, and how he persisted like a regular story book hero. And I wondered if he would shoot himself on my account, and that threw a awful scare into me,

for handsome women have a terrible responsibility in the way they treat men. And I wondered was I really doing the right thing, taking such a risk by treating him so sever and not speaking and here he was in the service of his country and all and Gawd knows I might be wrecking his whole life from then on. And furthermore I thought how hard it is to be refined and what a lot a person has to sacrifice to it, and that the roughnecks of this world seem to have most of the fun. And that it was certainly hard to be dignified but that my whole career was built on my refinement no less than my great talent, and I must respect my own position. Ah well, uneasy lies the tooth that wears a crown as the poet says, or something!

And by this time the coon had got tired pushing me and turning my face sea-ward had gone to take a rest and I took one too and actually fell asleep.

When I woke up I was moving again, going slow in the direction of the Inlet, and I felt quite refreshed and happy, and the whole of Atlantic City appeared to feel the same, for everybody I passed smiled and seemed to be enjoying theirselve. And they all seemed to smile at me in such a sweet, friendly way it

made my heart feel awful good. I was even quite surprised because although of course I am used to being recognized every place I go, but still, more people than ever was doing it this afternoon. I begun to think I must be looking pretty good and that my hat, about which I had had a few doubts, was a big success after all. It really was a sort of triumphal progress as the saying is, and I had half a mind to turn around when we passed the last pier; but the ocean looked so beautiful and pink in the sunset and going the other way it would of been in my eyes, so I just let myself be rolled on and on until we was almost to the Inlet and not a soul in sight. Then the chair stopped and was turned against the rail.

"Now I've got you at last!" said a unexpected voice, and around from the back came, not the coon, but Captain Raymond.

"Where did you come from?" I asked, hardly able to speak.

"I have had the honor of pushing you into this secluded corner of—of the ocean!" he said, his blue eyes twinkling.

"But how—how . . ." I sputtered.

"I bought off the colored man while you

were sleeping," he said. "And have been your humble servant for almost an hour!"

Can you beat it? You cant!

"Well of all the nerve," I began, remembering how people had smiled, and no wonder!

"What are you going to do about it?" he asked.

"Walk home this minute!" I says, struggling with the rugs. But they had a will of their own and it was on his side and I just couldnt seem to get free of them.

"Oh I say, don't be so absurd!" he says smilingly.

"I'm not!" I says.

"Oh but you are!" he insisted. "Just sit still and let me show you something!"

Well, there was nothing for me but to give in or look a utter fool, and he *was* so attractive! And, well anyways, I waited and he brought out a letter from his overcoat pocket and it was the very one he had wrote me first and I had returned it to the hotel clerk.

"Please just open it!" he begged, and I did and nearly fainted because inside was a letter in Jim's handwriting addressed to me and introducing Captain Charles Raymond who was with him in France, only being gassed was now

home on leave and would I show him every courtesy as he had been good to my ever loving husband, Jim!

"And really and truly I wouldn't have been so persistant, Miss LaTour," Captain Raymond was saying as I looked up. "I had intended using it when I got to New York of course. But when they put me in charge of this entertainment for the benefit of the blind, and I discovered you were here, I was simply determined to get you to take part in it. Couldn't you do us just one little dance? It would be such a drawing-card, your name would. That was all I wanted, really!"

Believe you me I didn't know what to think or how I felt. Did I feel flat? I did! Did I feel relieved? I did!! So it wasnt a mash at all, and for a moment I felt a lonelier war-widow than ever. Then I remembered how Jim said in the note to be nice to this bird, and I could see, now that I looked at him good, that he was the sort which it is perfectly safe to be nice to. Not that he didnt admire me, either, but that he was just as refined as me and more so and was Jim's pal beside. So I says yes, of course I would dance, and we talked and talked and the sun went down, and

got to be real friends and was it good to hear about Jim, first hand? IT WAS! And after a while we commenced to walk back toward the hotel, pushing the chair, and the lights was all lit along the walk like Fairyland, and also in the shops so they was more like show-cases than ever. And then I got the second shock of the afternoon because at ten past six with dinner at seven, there was Ma in the Ocean Lunch eating griddle-cakes, fish-balls, Salsbury steake and coffee, with a little strained honey and apple-pie on the side! No wonder she could diet so good! And I take it to my credit that, since she did not notice me, I never let on that I seen her, not then nor afterward at dinner when she refused everything but two dill pickles!

But it wasn't until afterward when I was in the star dressing-room at the Apollo Theatre, putting on my make-up for the benefit that the real blow came. I was just about ready to go on when in rushed Goldringer, all breathless with a cablegram in his hand.

"Its all right about Olivette Twist!" he puffed at me. "We'll begin making that fillum Tuesday!" and he threw the message

down on my dressing table. It was signed by our London manager and it read:—

"Present location of Charles Dickens uncertain but material is uncopyrighted, shoot."

And so immediately after the show, myself and Ma went back to New York to get a twenty-four hour rest before commencing work again.

V

NOW IS THE TIME

I

Believe you me, the world to-day is just about as settled as a green passenger on a trip to Bermuda. There is that same awful feeling of not knowing is something going to happen or not—do you get me? You do! And it can't help but strike even a mere womanly woman and lady like I, that unless the captain and officers keep a firm hand on the crew until we get a little ballast in the hold, we are likely to get in Dutch. Not meaning the Germans necessarily, but the Russians, or something just as bad. And perhaps it may seem strange for me to know about them nautchical terms, but anybody which has once been to Bermuda learns what ballast is on account of their not having hardly any on them boats because of the water not being deep enough, and believe you me, nothing I had to do in the fillum we made

after what was left of us arrived there, and it was some fillum at that—$1000. for bathing costumes alone and me as "The Sea King's Conquest" in silver scales, although hardly knowing how to swim—was a patch on the treatment which that unballasted boat handed me on the trip down.

Well anyways, even when sitting in the security of my flat on the Drive, which Gawd knows it aught to be secure what with the salary I get and moving-pictures will be the last thing the common people will give up;—even with this security and the handsomest furniture any installment house could provide, and every other equipment which is necessary to one so prominent in my line as myself, still even in the scarcity of the home, as the poet says, I am conscious that the world is, or could quite easily be, on the blink.

And ain't it the truth? Even the simplest soul, buried in the wilds of Broadway and wholly absorbed in their own small life must feel the unrest. No use kidding ourselves about it. It's time for all good Americans to quit fighting among theirselves and come to the aid of the country. Regardless of race, creed or color, as the free hospital says, and

Gawd knows the hospital will be where they'll land if they don't. Do you get me? Probably not. What I mean is, it's time we quit talking and *did* something. What? I dunno, quite, but it was this general line of thought, which come to me while listening to the director give me my instructions for the ball-room scene in "The Dove of Peace," where I catch the Russian Ambassador giving the nitroglycerine or some other patent face-cleanser to the fake Senator, caused me to reform the White Kittens. That and Ma's peculiar behavior, plus the new cook.

You see it come over me all of a sudden that we ladies have now a vote and so forth, which unquestionably makes us more or less citizens the same as the men, and if the country went bluey, why wouldn't it be our fault as well? And I come to this partially through the sense of unrest and having eat something that didn't settle good and Ma's behavior. All coming at once they kind of got together and exploded into my idea.

Well anyways, I had just come to a place in my personal life where I seen a little peace and quiet ahead and nothing to do but go up in an aeroplane for the second reel of "The Dove."

The war was over without Jim being killed in it and a new chance offered by a big picture contract the minute his uniform should be off him; I was going strong with nothing but Broadway releases and a salary which made Morgan jealous; my spring clothes hadn't a failure among them and only one of my hats was too tight in the head. The fool dogs was both healthy, the cook had stayed a month; the car had been in order for over three weeks, and I had successfully nursed Ma through the flu. And I thought fat could not harm me, as the poet says, for I had dieted to-day. When all of a sudden Ma, who had hardly got over the Influenza, come down with Bolshevism.

Now the trouble with these new diseases is that the doctors don't seem to know anything about them nor what makes them catching. At least that is the line of talk they pull, but I got a hunch myself, that if the flu had been quarantined right in the first place it could of been stopped. Do you get me? You do! And I will say one more word in favor of Influenza. You was obliged to report it, if only to the Board of Health. But Bolshevism seems to be like a cold in the head. If you catch it, that evidently is nobody's business but your

own; if you spread it—the same. Then again folks are kind of proud of having had the flu. It makes conversation and everything, and one which has escaped feels a little mortified like admitting they had never seen Charlie Chaplin. Indeed, people certainly do get a lot of pleasure out of illness and etc. And so long as it is under control, all right, leave them enjoy theirselves. They had to suffer first and mabe a little talk is coming to them.

But with this Bolshevism it's the other way around. The talk comes first, but believe you me, the suffering will come afterwards. And if they could only be made to realise this ere too late, a whole lot of patients would be cured before they got it. A ounce of Americanism is worth a pound of red propaganda, as the poet says, or would of had he written to-day.

Things started with Ma as per usual upsetting the cook which has come to be a habit with her, for cooking is to Ma what his art is to Caruso—naught but death could tear her from it permanent. And while I give her credit for trying in every way to be an idle rich, the kitchen might as well be furnished with magnets and she a nail for all she can keep out of it with the natural result that keeping out of

it is the best thing the cooks we hire do. And I can't say with any truth that I have made as much effort to break her of that as of some other lack of refinements, such as remembering that toothpicks ain't a public utility and never to say "excuse my back," or keep her knife and fork for the next course at the Ritz. Because believe you me, Ma is some cook and a real authograph dinner by her is something to bring tears of sweet memory to the eyes of the older generation and leave us young things in sympathetic wonder about them dear dead days when first class home-cooking was a custom, not a curiosity. And so while the material side of life don't interest me much, what with my work and etc. to take my mind off it, still even a artist must eat or Gawd knows where the strength to act in the "Dove of Peace" or any other six-reeler would come from if I didn't, and Ma's is that simple nourishing kind, but with quality, the same as the sort of dresses I wear—made out of two dollars worth of material and a thousand dollar idea.

Well anyways, our latest cook which had a husband in the service and had took up her work again so's to release him for the front at Camp Mills, for he got no further, heard he

was coming back home, having got his discharge and it upset her so but whether from joy or rage, I don't know which, that there was nothing to eat in the kitchen but a little liquor she had left at seven-thirty, when we went in to see what was the cause of delay, and me with Maison Rosabelle and a friend to dinner. So Ma woke her up out of her emotions which she claimed had overcome her, and give her a honorable discharge of her own and then turned up the ends of her sleeves, and only a little hampered by the narrow skirt to the green satin evening gown she had on her, give us a meal as per above described. And no one would of cared how long it was before the intelligence office—I mean domestic, not U.S. Army—sent us a cook but that in trying to save her dress Ma got hot grease on her right hand and that changed the situation because we had to call up next day and take anything they had—and they sent us up a German woman.

Well, believe you me, that was a shock because I had an idea that all the Germans in the country was either interned or incognito, but this one wasn't even disguised, which isn't so remarkable on account of her being pretty near as big as Ma and a voice on her like a fog-horn

with a strong accent on the fog. I never in my life see so many bags and bundles and ecteras as that female had with her, for she was undoubtedly one, although she had a sort of moustache beside the voice. But what she had in voice she certainly lacked in words. When Ma set out to ask her the usual questions which everybody does, although their heart is trembling with fear, she won't take the job, this lady Hun didn't divulge no more information about herself than we asked. She was as stingy with her language as if it had been hard liquor. Ma asked her to come in, and she did, and sat without being asked upon one of the gold chairs in the parlor which I certainly never expected it would survive the test, they being made for parlor rather than sitting room.

Well anyways, it's a fact she certainly was a mountain and if she were a fair specimen, all this about the Germans starving to death is the bunk. Only her being over here may of made a difference. Well, after she had set down a bundle done up in black oil-cloth, a cute little hand-bag about a yard long made out of somebody's old stair-carpet, a shoe-box with a heel of bread sticking out at one end, an umbrella which looked like a sea-side one, a pot of

white hyacinths in full bloom and a net-bag full of little odds and ends, she still had an old black pocket-book and a big bulky bundle done up in a shawl lying idly in her lap. After I had taken all this in, I gave her personally the once-over and was surprised to see she wasn't so old as her figure, or anything like it. For by the size of her she might of been the Pyramids, but her face was quite young and if she had been a boy I would of said the moustache was the first cherished down.

"What's your name, dearie?" says Ma, which I simply can't learn her not to be familiar with servants.

"Anna," says the lump.

"And where do you come from?" says Ma, giving a poor imitation of a detective.

"Old Country," says Anna. Well, Ma and me at once exchanged glances, putting name and place together.

"German?" says Ma. "Of course!"

"Swedish," says Anna, more lumpishly than ever.

And just at that moment the air was filled with a big laugh that none of us there had give voice to. It was *some* shock, that laugh, and Ma and me looked around expecting to see

who had come into the room, but it was nobody. Anna was the only one who didn't seem disturbed. She just went on sitting.

"Who was that?" says Ma.

"It must of been outside," I says, for it was warm and we had the windows open so's to let in the gasoline and railroad smoke and a little fresh air.

"I guess so," says Ma. Then she went back to her third-degree.

"So you're Swedish!" says Ma. "Can you cook?"

"Good!" says Anna. "Svell cook!"

"Well, dearie!" says Ma, "why was it you left your last place?"

"Too hot!" says Anna. And again me and Ma exchanged glances.

"Are you a good American?" says Ma.

"Good American-Swedish," says Anna. And immediately that awful laugh was repeated. This time it was in the room, no doubt about it. And yet no one was there outside ourselfs.

"My Gawd!" says Ma. "What was it?"

"Somebody is hid some place!" I says. "And I'd like to know who is it with the cheap sense of humor?"

"It bane Frits," says Anna. "Na, na, Frits!"

"But where on earth . . ." I was commencing, when I noticed Anna was unwinding the shawl off the package in her lap. And then in another moment we seen Frits for our own selves, for there he was, a big moth-eaten parrot, interned in a cage, making wicked eyes at us and giving us the ha-ha like the true Hun he was!

"Frits and me, we stay!" announced Anna comfortably. "We stay!"

"But look here," says I, "we didn't start out to hire any parrots."

"Why Mary Gilligan!" says Ma, and I could see she was scared that if Frits went Anna would certainly go, too. "Why Mary Gilligan, I thought you was fond of dumb animals!" she says.

"And so I am," I says. "The dumber the better. But this one is evidently far from it! How am I going to figure out my income tax with this bird hanging around?"

"Hang in den Kitchen!" says Anna firmly, and at that we gave in, because cooks is cooks, and what's a bird more or less after all? Still I didn't like him on account of suspecting he

wasn't a neutral any more than Anna was for all she claimed to be a Swede. I had read a piece in the paper about where the Germans was pretending to be Swede or Spanish or anything they could get away with so's to remain free to spread Bolshevism and influenza and bombs and send up the price of dry and fancy goods and put through the Prohibition amendment and all them other gentle little activities for which they are so well and justly known.

But I thought knowledge is power as the guy which wrote the copy-book says, and I had the drop on Anna through being on to her disguise and beside which I could see Ma was going to be miserable if she had to eat out while her hand was in the sling, and so we took the viper to our bosom, or in other words, we hired her, and anyways, she had already accepted the job and it would of been a lot of trouble to get her out by force. Which, believe you me, a person seldom has to do with servants now-a-days, and confirmed me about her being German because naturally people don't hire them, if acknowledging to themselves that they *are* Germans any more than they would now deliberately import sauerkraut or any

other German industry. Do you get me? You'd better!

But in this case there was a reasonable doubt together with a real necessity, although from what come of it, I feel, looking backwards, it would of been better to eat out and suffer than to of compromised with our patriotic consciences like we done at that time. Because there is *no* reasonable doubt but that Anna's coming into the house was greatly responsible for Ma's catching Bolshevism.

II

Not that she caught it off Anna directly, because for once we had a cook which couldn't talk or understand American and so there was no use in Ma's hanging around the kitchen worrying the life out of her. And so the very first morning Anna was on the premises, Ma commenced hanging around and worrying the life out of me.

It happened we was waiting for the aeroplane I was to go up in to arrive at the studio, and so for once having my morning for myself, I thought I would just dash off my income tax return, and be done with it.

But it seems that this is one of the things which is easier said than done, the same as signing the peace-treaty, and believe you me, the last ain't got a thing on the former and I don't know did Pres. Wilson make out his own income tax return or not. But if he did and the collector of Internal Revenue left him get by with it as he must of or why would the Pres. be in Paris, which is out of the country, well anyways, if the Pres. did it alone, believe you me, he will get away with the treaty all right, and probably even write in this here Leg of Nations under table 13, page 1, of return and instructions page 2 under K (b) without having to ask anybody how to do it, he having undoubtedly shown the power to think.

Well anyways, I had taken all the poker-chips, silk-sale samples, old theatre programs and etc., out of my desk, found my fountain pen and a bottle of ink, and was turning that cute little literacy test around and over to see where would I commence and had got no further than the realization that most of my brains is in my feet instead of behind my face, when Ma comes in and commences worrying me because she could not cook nor yet crochet like the lillies of the field, or whatever that well-

known idle flower was. I tried to listen at least as politely as is ever required of a daughter to her mother, but when I was trying to figure out my answer to question No. 5 and getting real mad over its personalness, I couldn't stand to hear her complain over not being able to crochet them terrible mats she makes which are not fit for anything except Xmas presents, anyways.

"The trouble with you, Ma," I snapped at last, "is that you aught to get a live-wire outside interest. You're getting out of date. Ladies don't crochet no more and even knitting has been dished by the armistice. You never read a newspaper or a book. You should go in for something snappy and up to the moment like literature or jobs for soldiers, or business, or something."

This got Ma's goat right off, like I hoped it would.

"Oh, so I'm on the shelf, am I?" she says. "well, leave me tell you Mary Gilligan, if it wasn't for us back numbers you new numbers wouldn't even *be* here, don't forget that! And after having been the first American lady to do the double backward leap on the two center trapeses, I can hardly be called a dead one,

even if a little heavier than I was. And from that time on I have never ceased to be forward."

"You'd have to show me," I says, grimly.

"All right, I will," she says.

And believe you me, she did. She went and got on her dolman and her spring hat and left me in wrath and the midst of that income tax with that "I'll never come back" air so familiar to all well-regulated families.

Well, as I sat there struggling over where to put the × and = marks, and how much exemption could I get away with and still be on speaking terms with myself, and wondering whether the two fool dogs was dependents or not—which they aught to be, seeing how helpless they are and a big expense and Gawd knows I keep them only for appearences and they aught to come under the head of professional expenditures, because no well-known actress but has them to help out the scenery—well anyways, I was deep in this highly highbrow occupation in the comparatively perfect silence of my exclusive flat where ordinarily we don't hear a thing but the neighbors' pianola and the dumb-waiter and the auto horns on the drive and the train just beyond—well, this

comparatively for New York, perfect silence was broke by an awful yell in the apartment itself.

"Anarchy!" a terrible voice hollered. And then again "Anarchy! Anarchy!"

Believe you me, my blood turned to lemon soda for a moment and the boys in the trenches never had worse crawling down the back than me at that minute, coming as it did right on top of me, writing in opposite to B. income from salaries—you know—$6000.00. The silence which followed was even worse. And I sat there sort of frozen while expecting a bomb would go off any minute, and Gawd knows sixty thousand is a lot of money, but any one which investigated the true facts could quickly see that I earn every cent of it and anyways brains has a right to the bigger share, not to mention ability, and if the way I worked myself up from the lower classes ain't proof of what can be done single-handed in America, I don't know what is, and anybody which works as hard and lives as decent as I done can do the same, not that I want to hand myself anything extra, only speaking personally, I am in a position to know.

But just the same I wasn't reasoning at the

minute and the justice, as you might say, of my case didn't occur to me until later. As I sat there trying to remember to think, the voice yells it again, only this time with additions.

"Anarchy! Love Anarchy! Pretzel!"

And then I realised it was that parrot belonging to the new cook.

Can you imagine my feelings on top of my suspicions of her? You can! I got up and went into the kitchen to see if a bomb was mabe being prepared for our dinner, but not at all. The kitchen was scrubbed to the last tile, something that smelled simply grand was baking, the white hyacinths was in the sun on the window-sill, and Anna was humming under her breath while she rolled out biscuit-dough. The radical parrot was shut up, but only as to mouth, he being loose and walking about the top of the clothes-wringer, making himself very much at home, and giving me *some* evil look as I come in.

"Aren't you afraid he'll get away?" I says.

"Huh?" says Anna, stopping rolling, and blinking at me.

"Lose him—parrot——!" I says, pointing to him and flapping my arms like wings.

"Frits?" she said. "Na—Frits like liberty!"

And that was all I could get out of her. I stuck around for a few minutes more, until Anna commenced to give me the cook's-eye, that bird backing her up and sneering at me while dancing slowly on the wringer, but not moving a step. So I got out and back to the parlor but not to my work which Gawd knows I had to take it over to the bank and leave them do it for me after all—but sat down instead to consider them two suspicious birds in the back part of the flat. I personally myself was convinced that there was something very wrong about Anna. But so far she had said nothing under the espionage law exactly and I didn't know could you arrest a bird for too much liberty of speech even though it loved anarchy, and liberty and everything and was undoubtedly capable of spreading propaganda what with the voice it had.

Well anyways, as I was holding my marcelle wave with both hands and racking what little was underneath it over the situation, I heard the key in the lock and in come Ma all flushed and cheerful and pleased with herself and handed me another jolt.

"I had a real sweet, pleasant morning," she says, taking off her gloves and hat and wip-

ing her face with one of them big handkerchiefs like she used to carry in the circus and will not give up. "A real nice time," she says, egging me on to question her.

"Where have you been?" I says, like she wanted me to.

"Oh, just to a little Bolsheviki meeting," she says, casual. And picking up her things she started for her room.

"Hold on, Ma!" I says, having managed to get my breath before she reached the door. "Say that again, will you?"

She turned and come back at that, still keeping up the careless stuff.

"Certainly," she says, "Bolsheviki meeting. Are you interested in this up-to-date stuff?"

"Interested!" I says. "Of course I am. I'm against it. Why Ma Gilligan!" I says. "Do you know what Bolshevism *is?*"

"Do you?" says Ma, sweetly.

"No!" says I. "And neither do they. But I am sure it's the bunk, and I feel it's wrong, and I am ashamed of you going!"

"How old-fashioned of you, dearie," says Ma. "Have you ever heard a speaker or been to a meeting?"

"I don't need to!" I says short, being kind of at a loss.

"Well, I have!" says Ma, triumphant.

"Where was it at?" I demanded.

"Down to the circus," says Ma. "In the Bear-wrestler's dressing room. I went to call on some of the folks and get the news and Madame Jones, the new automobile act—very distinguished lady—got me to it. A most exclusive affair, with only the highest priced acts invited!"

"And who spoke?" I says.

"Kiskoff, the bear-wrestler," says Ma. "It certainly was interesting."

"What did he say?" I says, it getting harder and harder to remember I was a lady and she my only mother. "What did he say?"

"I dunno!" says Ma.

"You don't know!" I fairly yells. "And why don't you know?"

"Because he only talks Russian!" says Ma, and walked out, leaving me flat.

Well, believe you me, I was that upset I scarcely took any notice of my lunch, although it was a real nice meal, commencing with some juicy kind of fish and eggs and ending up with

pancakes rolled up and filled with cream curds and powdered sugar.

Ma took to these eats immensely, and she and Anna exchanged a couple of smiles, which made me feel like the only living American. And when later in the day Ma told me she thought she'd join the Bolshevists if she didn't have to be immersed, and that this Kiskoff's life was in danger for his beliefs just like the early Romans and nobody knew where he lived, but was a man of mystery, I couldn't stand it another moment, but beat it for a long walk by myself because my nerves was sure on edge and that aeroplane stunt facing me next week.

But the walk wasn't altogether pleasant, at least not at the start or at the finish, because when I come out of our palatial near-marble front stoop, there was a guy standing which might just as well of had on the brass-buttons and all because you could tell at once by the disguise that he was a plain-clothes cop. Not that I am so familiar with them, but their clothes is generally so plain any one could tell them. Do you get me? You do!

Well anyways, this bird was standing opposite our door, and at the second glance I had him spotted or nearly so, and when I come

back from walking fast and wishing to Gawd Jim was back to advise me and occupying our flat instead of Germany, the fly-cop was still there by which I became certain he was one; the more so as I watched him from a window once I was in, and the way he kept camouflaging himself as a casual passer-by, ended my doubts.

Well, was that some situation? It was! Here was myself, a good American though but an ignorant woman, surrounded by all the terrible and disturbing elements of the day; with everything which aught to be kept out of every U. S. A. home creeping into mine, and all so sudden that I hadn't got my breath yet much less any action. In fact, I was sort of dizzy with what was happening, and my head didn't quiet down any when, after dinner that night, I heard deep voices out in back.

"Anna has company!" says Ma in explanation. "Two of them, and I think they are talking Russian. At any rate one has a beard almost as handsome as Mr. Kiskoff's."

This got my angora, and while no lady would ever spy on her cook, this was surely a exception and so I took a quiet peek in through the pantry slide and there was Anna and two big

he-men all talking at once. The window was open a little ways from the top and on it was Frits, also talking in Russian or something, and no earthly reason why he couldn't take his liberty and go right out if he had really wanted it. And still another jolt was handed me when I realised one of the men was our very own ice-man!

Believe you me, when I went to bed that night in my grey French enameled Empire style I was wore out with the series of jolts which the day has handed me. But it is not my custom to sit back and talk things over too long. I have ever noticed that the person which talks too much seldom does a whole lot, and that a quick decision if wrong, at least learns you something, and you can start again on the right track. And no later than the next day after a funny, though good breakfast, of coffee and new bread with cinnamon and sugar baked into it and herrings in cream, I commenced to act.

"Ma, are you going to keep up this Bolshevist bull?" I says.

"I am!" she says. "You told me to do something modern and I'm doing the very modernest thing there is!"

"You are going to be wrong on that by this P. M.," I says, "or to-morrow at latest," I says, "because there is or aught to be something moderner, and that is United Americanism!" I says. "And since the only way to fight fire is with it, I am going to start a rival organization and start it quick!" I says, "and I'm going to do it on a sounder basis than your people ever dreamed of because we'll all talk English so's we'll each of us know what the organization is about!"

"Why Marie La Tour!" says Ma, which it's a fact she only calls me that when she's sore at me. "Why, Marie La Tour, what is your organization going to do?"

"I don't know yet beyond one thing," I says, "we are going to *get together* and keep together!"

And so, without waiting for a come-back or any embarrassing questions, I hustled into a simple little grey satin Trotteur costume which is French for pony-clothes and left that homefull of heavy-weight traitors where a radical parrot yelled "Anarchy" from morning till night, and even the steam radiators had commenced to smell like dynimite. And having shut the door after me with quite some explo-

sion myself, I had the limousine headed to the White Kittens Annual Ball Assn., which I was due at it on account of all the most prominent ladies in picture and theatrical circles being on the committee and I naturally being indespensible if only for the value of my name. So I started off but not before I noticed that the same plain-clothes john was again perched opposite my front door.

III

All the way to the Palatial Hotel which the meeting is always held in the grand ball room of, I kept getting more and more worked up. Things had certainly gone too far when Bolshevism had spread from the parlor to the kitchen or visa-versa, I didn't know which, and my own Ma being undoubtedly watched by the more or less Secret Service, all because of her having taken a fancy to them whiskers of this Kiskoff cockoo, which is the only explanation I could make of it, and after being a widow twenty years she aught to of been ashamed of herself. Still, it was a better explanation for her to of lost her head than her patriotism, and I tried to think this the case. And my own

position was something to bring tears to a glass eye, what with my well-known war-work and a perfectly good husband still in the service. And I had made a threat to take action, and had no idea what it would be, only that now I certainly had to deliver the goods.

Well anyways, in despair and the limousine, I finally arrived at the Palatial and there in the lobby was several other White Kittens which were also late, so we give each other's clothes the once-over and asked after our healths and etc., and then hurried up in the elevator to where the meeting had already commenced.

Believe you me, my mind stuck to that meeting about as good as a W.S.S. which has been in your purse a month does when you find your card. The room was as full as could be with the biggest crowd I ever knew to turn out for it. But somehow while I am generally pretty well interested in any crowd, this time nothing seemed to register except my own thoughts. Even the chairlady couldn't hold my attention partially because she was Ruby Roselle, and what they wanted to elect that woman for I don't know because her head is certainly not the part of her which earned her theatrical

reputation and a handsome back is no disgrace and if that and a handful of costume is art far be it from me to say anything: but it is neither refinement nor does it make a good executor for a live organization like the Kittens. And what is more, any woman which had her nose changed from Jewish to Greek right in the middle of a big feature fillum can't run any society to suit me, not to mention the faet that as I sat there watching her talk I come slowly to realize that she had several jewels and a couple of friends which was found to be pro-Germans and been interned, although nothing was ever proved onto Ruby herself.

Still, coming on top of what I had been going through the last couple of days, I took a sudden suspicion of her being lady-chairman to one of America's oldest organizations of the female gender, it having been formed 'way back in 1911. And what is furthermore, as I sat there hating her with her synthetic Christian nose and her genuine Jewish diamonds, the big idea come at last—a way to at once get something started before she did, because how did I know but she'd have the orchestra play "die Watch on Rinewine," and feed us on weenies and pumpernickle for supper at the

ball if something radical wasn't done at once? That is, I mean radical in the right sense, of course. So when she says "Any other remarks?" I jumped to my feet quick before she could say "the meeting is injoined."

"Yes, Miss Ruby Schwartz Roselle, there is," I said. "I will be obliged to have the floor a minute."

"You can have it for all of me, dearie," says Ruby, sweetly, as she recognized her enemy. "Miss Marie La Tour has the floor."

And then without hardly knowing what I was doing and forgetting even to feel did my nose need powder before I commenced, I began talking with something fluttering inside me like a bird's wing. You know—a feeling like a try-out before a big-time manager. But behind the scare, the strength of knowing you can deliver the goods.

"Ladies and fellow or, I should say, sister-Kittens!" I commenced. "There was a time when the well-known words 'Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of the party' so thrilled America that it has become not alone printed in all copy books, but is the first sentence which is learned by every typewriter. But since then times have changed

until, believe you me, now is the time for all good parties to come to the aid of the nation in order to show all which are not Americans first just where they get off, and ladies, we here assembled are a party not to be scorned, what with a sustaining membership of over five hundred, and more than a thousand one-dollar members. And what is more, though admittedly mere females we have a vote in most places now, including this state, and while I have no doubt you have always intended to be good citizens, having the vote you are now obliged to be so."

There was quite a little clapping at this, so I was encouraged to go on, although Ruby's voice says "Out of Order!" twice. Well, I couldn't see anybody that was behaving disorderly, so I just went ahead with my idea.

"And so my idea is this," I says. "That all Americans, whether lady or gentleman citizens, should get together in one big association for U. S. A. Actually get together instead of leaving things be. An association is, as I understand it, intended for purposes of association. And why not simply associate each association with every other, canning all small private schemes and party interests on the one

grand common interest of Bolsheviking the Bolsheviks? I'm sure that if all parties concerned will forget they are Democrats or Republicans or Methodists or Suffragists—even whether they are ladies or gentlemen, and remember they are Americans, nothing can ever rough-house this country like Europe has been in several places, for in Union is Strength, in God we Trust, but He helps those who helps themselves, and if we'll only drop our self-interests and make the union our first idea, God help the foreigners which tries to help themselves to our dear country!"

By this time the girls was giving me a hand the like of which I never had before on stage or screen, because their hearts were in them. Do you get me? You do! And it was quite a spell before Ruby could get order, although she kept pounding with the silver cat's-paw of her office. Finally, when she could make herself heard, she says very sarcastic,

"And how does Miss La Tour suggest we commence?" she says.

"By unanimously voting ourselfs 'The White Kittens Patriotic Association of America,'" I says at once. "Call a extra meeting to change the constitution temporarily from

annual Balls and festivals for the benefit of indignant members, to a association for associating with other associations as before suggested. Use part of the money from the ball just arranged for, to advertise our idea in newspapers and billboards, and believe you me, by the time we ladies get that far, some gentleman's association will be on the job to show us a practical way to use ourselves!"

Well, the Kittens seemed to think this all right, too, and in spite of Ruby, the next meeting was called and we broke up in high excitement, and I was surrounded by admiring friends all anxious to tell me they felt the same as me, and so forth and etc. And finally, after I had been treated to lunch by several of them, not including Ruby, I collapsed into my limousine, and said home James, and set my face flat-ward with a brave heart which knew no fear on account of having accomplished something worth while. Even the sight of the obtrusively unobtrusive bull still waiting like the wolf at the door, didn't dampen my spirit.

And it was not until I got upstairs that I commenced realizing that my own home would be the first place to set in order, and how could I be a great American female leader with a

Bolshevist mother and a German cook, and how could I preach a thing with one hand and not practice it with the other? Of course, I could fire the cook, but how about Ma? It was she herself settled that part of it the moment I stepped into the parlor, for there she was all alone except for the two dogs, and what was more, all of a heap, beside.

"Well, thank goodness, you decided to come home, Mary Gilligan!" she says. "Something awful has happened!"

"Not Jim?" I gasps, my heart nearly stopping, for he is always the first thing I think of.

"Jim, nothing!" says Ma. "It's poor Kiskoff!"

"Oh, him!" I says, relieved. "What of it?"

"They arrested him this morning!" says Ma, all broken up, the poor fish! "Arrested him just before the meeting!"

"Good!" I says. "I knew they would. The hound, he couldn't go around forever talking Bolshevism!"

"It wasn't for that," says Ma.

"Then for what?" I says, blankly.

"For back alimony!" says Ma, almost in tears. "It seems he married a girl out in Kan-

sas several years ago, and they parted when the circus left, and it wasn't Russian he was talking, but Yiddish! He speaks English as well as me."

"And I suppose you'll tell me next that he wasn't talking Bolshevism," says I.

"He wasn't—he was only asking them to join the circus-workers' union Local 21—" says Ma. "He explained it all to the cops!"

"Ma!" I demanded solemnly, a light coming over me. "Ma, have you honestly got any idea what this Bolshevism *is?* Come on, own up!"

"Certainly!" she says. "It's something like Spiritualism or devil-worship, ain't it? A sort of fancy religion!"

"Nothing so respectable!" I says very sharp, yet awful relieved that I had guessed the truth. "No such thing. Bolshevism is Russian for sore-head. Religion my eye! It's about as much a religion as small-pox is!"

Oh! the handicap of having no education! I certainly felt sorry for Ma. But I needn't of because she give me one of them looks of hers which always turns my dress to plaid calico and pulls my hair down my back again.

"Well, daughter, why didn't you say so in the first place?" she says, just as if she'd caught

me in a lie. But I let it pass and apologized, I was so glad to find she was a fake. And Ma promised to leave them low circus people alone for a spell and come back to the White Kittens again. I then announced I was going out and fire Anna. At that a look of terror came over Ma's face, and she restrained me by the sleeve.

"Be careful how you go near that kitchen!" she says warningly.

"For heaven's sakes, Ma!" I says. "What's wronger than usual out there?"

"I dunno, but I think something is!" she says. "I believe it's a bomb!"

"A bomb!" I says. "Whatter you mean?"

"Anna is out to market," says Ma, "and the one with the black beard like poor Kiskoff's brought it. 'For Anna,' says he, and shoved it at me, and snook off down the stairs like a murderer."

"Brought *what?*" I says.

"The bomb, of course!" says Ma, impatient herself.

"How do you know it's one?" I says, a little uneasy and wishing I had fired Anna before she got this swell chance of firing us.

"Well, it looks just like the one in the pic-

ture where them three Germans blew theirselves up in the newspaper!" says she. "And it ticks."

"My Gawd!" I says. "Where is the thing?"

"On the kitchen-table," says Ma.

"Well," I says, bravely. "I think I aught to take a look at it anyways."

"I wished you wouldn't," says she. But she came down the hall after me like the loyal mother she is, and the two of us stopped at the threshhold as the poet says.

And there, sure enough, in the middle of the spotless oilcloth on the kitchen table lay a mighty funny looking package, about the size of a dish-pan and done up in that black oil-cloth them foreigners seem so fond of. And between yells from that radical parrot, who commenced his "I love Anarchy!" the moment he set eyes on us, we could hear that evil-looking package tick as plain as day.

Well, what with a mother and a father both practically born on the centre trapese and used myself to taking chances since early childhood, I don't believe I'm more of a coward than most. But I will admit my heart commenced going too quick at that sight and the radical bird was as usual loose in the place, and didn't make

my nerves any easier. But a stitch in time often saves a whole pair of silk ones, and remembering this, I took some quick action. I turned up my georgette crepe sleeves, and the front of my skirt so's not to splash it, and made straight for the sink, keeping my eye on the centre-table all the while.

"Look out!" screams Ma. "What are you going to do?"

"Throw cold water on it!" I says. And filling the dish-pan I took a long sling with it, and pretty near drowned the kitchen table, to say nothing of the scare I threw into Frits. As soon as he quit, we listened again, but my efforts had been in vain, for the thing was still ticking—slow, loud ticks, and very alarming.

"No good!" I says, sadly. "We'll have to take severer measures!"

"Well, what'll they be?" says Ma.

"There's a plain-clothes cop outside looking for trouble," says I grimly, "and here is where I hand him a little," says I.

And then, without waiting even to roll down the georgettes, I hurried to the window and looked out. Like most cops, he couldn't be seen at first when wanted, but finally he came

into view and I tried to catch his attention, but was unable to at first. But finally he heard me and looked up, and I beckoned.

"Bomb!" I says. "Hurry up!"

And did he hurry? He did! I would not of believed a man his size could do it, but he must of beat the elevator, for it never brought me up that fast. When I let him in, his lack of surprise was the most alarming thing which had yet been pulled. He evidently *expected* a bomb to be here.

"By golly, we'll get them now!" he says triumphantly. "We been watching this place for two months on account of having it straight that there is a bunch of Bolshevist bomb makers in this building or the next one, and this is the first time anything has stirred! Where is your bomb? Lead me to it!"

V

Well, I didn't lead him exactly. Since he was so set up about it, I let him go ahead, but Ma and me followed close behind and told him the way and everything. When he came to the kitchen door Frits let out a yell "Anarchy! I love Anarchy!" and you aught to of

seen the cop stagger in his tracks for a minute. But he came to immediate, and we all stood at attention while he give that bundle the once-over. It was ticking away as strong as ever.

"Hey! get me a pail of water, quick!" says the cop. I did it, and then, I will certainly give him credit for it, he grabbed up the bundle and plunged it in with both hands just as Anna come in at the door.

Believe you me, I never saw anything so funny as what happened then. The cop took his hands out the water and stood there dripping and staring at her.

"Hello, Anna!" he says. "What you doing here?"

"Ay bane working!" says Anna. "How you bane, Mike?"

"Pretty good!" he says. "But kind of busy with a bomb we got here. Stand off while I take a look. It has quit ticking and I guess it's drownded!"

He lifted the wet bundle out, and the minute Anna sees it she set up a yell as good as one of her pet parrot's.

"That bane mine!" she says, making a grab for it. But Mike held her off.

"Yours, eh?" he says, severely. *"Yours!* Well, we'll just have a look at it, my girl!"

With which he undid the string, unfolded the oilcloth, and there was a big new alarm-clock with the price still on it—2 beans—and a round, heavy cheese!

"Bane youst a present from may feller!" says Anna coyly.

Well, did we feel cheap? We did. And in addition to that Mike, the smart and brave young cop, was disappointed something terrible.

"Who is this Anna?" I asked him soon's I got my breath.

"Oh, a Swede girl—I know her a long time," he says foolishly. "Used to entertain me in the basement when I was on the regular force. She's *some* cook! You're lucky to have her."

And just then this ex-pro-German Bolshevist cook we was so lucky to have starts to yell again!

"Frits! Oy! Frits!" she says. "He bane gone! Make un yoump back!"

And sure enough, there was Frits on the fire-escape of the flat next to us. He had give one hop and a flutter and got across, where he

sat, silent for once in his life and giving us the evil-eye.

"Yoump back," says the cook in passionate entiety. "Yoump back to your Aniky that you love! All day you yell you love may an' now you leave may!"

And as she said them words still another weight was lifted from my shoulders, although not from hers, for instead of jumping back, that radical bird which it seemed was not a radical after all and acting like the most conventional parrot in the world, commenced to climb up the fire-escape of the other apartment house, like he was leaving us forever.

"Yoump!" implored Anna, but he just climbed, instead.

"Here, wait, and I'll get him!" says Mike. "Glad to do it, Anna. I can step across easy enough!"

Anna held his coat, and he swung hisself over to the other side almost as neat as a picture-actor, and commenced following that mean-hearted bird up and up, story after story, until that animal led him in at a open window about three flats above. We waited in silence and, believe you me, I had about commenced to believe that bird and he was never coming

out again, when down comes Mike, the bird tucked into his vest, his face simply purple with excitement. I never seen any acrobat work swifter or quieter than he did. He landed on the kitchen floor and closed the window behind him before he even give Anna her bird.

"The telephone!—quick! The telephone—headquarters at once—I've got that guy this time at last! And to think that a damn bird had to find him for me!"

And it was the truth. Frits, far from being an alien, was a good little American parrot and had actually led the cop to the very place he had been looking for all that while, and they arrested two guys and everything!

And after they got through the phone rang and there was Goldringer's voice.

"The aeroplane has come, Miss La Tour," he says. "When will you be over?"

"First thing in the morning!" I says, relieved to think of a quiet day ahead. Ain't it grand to have work you love to do? It's so restful!

VI

THE GLAD HAND

I

I SEE a piece in the paper where that ex-leading headliner of the old German Big-Time Circuit, William Hohenzollern, him that used to appear in the spiritualistic act known as "Me and God," claims he had no hand in starting those fireworks in Europe which has recently ended in a Fourth of July celebration. And although myself a good American and looking with doubt upon any statement known to be German, I am sort of inclined to believe him. At any rate, to believe that he was not the whole cheese in the matter, but only a sort of limp limberger, or swiss, and full of holes. Because it's my experience personally myself, that a strong personality with a clean-cut idea can usually get a thing done if they elect theirself boss and stick on the job until it is finished, but if they call a com-

mittee meeting and discuss the action before them, the whole idea is likely to get stalled. Why, look at Congress! Not that I, being a mere lady of the female sect, know why or how they get stalled, or on just what. But it's a cinch they do and are, and you can prove it by any editorial page in the country. And it seems that Billy the Bone-head, confessed to the reporter, which managed to get this Sunday story printed, that a committee meeting of Yonkers or something was called about the war, he, Bill the Badman, not having the bean to go to it alone, and it was them ruined the war, or so he says. Which goes to show that not alone in the theatrical and moving-picture worlds do the heads of departments alibi their flivvers, but also in the King-business, and it's a habit which may even yet ruin the former, as it pretty near has the latter, unless they quit shirking and deliver better goods. Because if the Head Has-Been had had any real thinker and had thought up the war all by his little self and forced it on his book-keeper, cashier and so forth, he might of got away with it like Napoleon and Rockefeller and Eva Tanguay and a lot of them

which has thrust riches and success upon themselves.

But no committee can ever do that sort of thing. It takes a single-handed personality, and I guess mabe the biggest bluff Germany has had to confess to is her ex-leader. He seems the A-1 example of how true it is that well-known tailors' ad, "Clothes make the man." Also it inspires me to invent a quotation to hang beside the famous one of Shakespeare's, I think it is "Do it now!" which you see so often, mine being "Do it yourself!" Well, you will if you are the able one on a committee. Everybody which has served on one knows that every committee is composed of the one which does all the work and three to six others which uses most of their vitality and imagination in thinking up excuses and offering them.

Well, anyways, the foregoing is why I simply eliminated the other members of my Theatrical Ladies' Committee of Welcome to Our Returning Heroes. And eliminating them was so simple, too. I just didn't call any committee. And why would I, what with the knowledge I had gained through former experiences? Believe you me, a lady which

learns by experience is a great little time-saver, although admittedly rare, but in my line you don't fall out of a air-plane more than once, and any successful picture actress and dancer like myself will tell you the same. So as to committees, none for me, thanks just the same, as the man said to the soda clerk the morning of July first, 1919 A. D., which is Latin for Anti-Drinking. Not that I will ever again try to get into the strong-character class with the aforementioned celebrities, for a reputation for doing anything well is as good as a signed contract to do it. And my advice to young girls is, don't let it be known you can do anything well or you'll have to deliver constantly. Look as ignorant as possible whenever anything is suggested except the thing you are burning to get after, or your time will be taken up with a lot of useless side-lines that get you nowheres. There is a person for every job if you just let the job alone until the right person finds it. Did you ever notice the way simps which can't do a thing always get it done for them? You have! Well—from this on, here's where I look like a poor fish whenever anybody outside of a motion-picture mag-

nate or a theatrical manager makes a noise like work to be done.

All the amateur stuff can be taken care of by the sweet womanly women who ain't got anybody to support except their dressmakers, and not by a mere professional earning near a hundred thousand a year like I. My final lesson on working with volunteer boards and committees is a un-wept memory, and believe you me, that Chateau Terry battle had nothing on some of the War Relief Committee board rooms I seen in executive session and keep the home fires burning is right, we done it, especially the White Kittens Belgian Relief, which it's a fact we nearly split over whether we'd print our postcard appeals on pink or yellow cards!

Well, anyways, I suppose these relief committees was a big help to them that was on them if not to any one else, and after all a lot of money somehow got left to do good with after expenses was paid. But the biggest relief I know of come from relieving ourselfs of them relief committees, and the last of all was the Welcome Home one.

I wouldn't of gone on it in the first place

only I was so low in my mind. And who wouldn't be a little low even with my cheery disposition after such a morning as I went through, first commencing with the loss of Maude.

Not that I had ever liked her nor 'Frisco, her husband, either, but losing her was worse than living with her any day, and when Ma come in and broke the news I wasn't in any mood for it, struggling as I was over the joint contract which Goldringer had just sent on from Los Angeles as a nice surprise and welcome for Jim which we were expecting to hear he would be leaving France any day now. It called for seventy-five thousand per each of us for six joint pictures, our expenses to the coast, and I was holding out for a car while there and a special publicity man of our own to be paid by them, but chosen by us, meaning Rosie, which has so faithfully let the public know every time I sneezed these last five years and has a way of disguising a two column ad so's the editor thinks it's a news item.

Well, anyways, I was reading through all that foreign language portion of this contract and had waded past about a page of "to wit. viz.: party of the first part" stuff, which sounds

like it didn't mean anything, but is where they sometimes slip one over on you, when in come Ma with a big home-made cruller partly in her hand and partly in her face. She was dreadfull agitated but had to get rid of the first part of the second party before she could speak, and I put in a few seconds of watchful waiting, wondering how could she do it, for Ma had put on at least thirty lbs. the last few months and believe you me, she was no slif before then, weighing some amount she would never tell just what and anybody knows what that means with a woman. But up to just recent she had gone through spells where she was making at least the faint motions of dieting, or when not that, sighing and saying she hadn't really ought to over every second helping but taking it. Do you get me? You do!

Since she had heard Jim was coming back, however, she had taken to eating everything in sight regardless. It give me real pleasure to think of any mother-in-law feeling that way about her daughter's husband and dancing partner coming back, for with many mothers it is nothing of the kind. So I made no re-

marks upon the cruller, and finally Ma give a gulp and gasped out the bad news.

"Maude is gone!" she says.

"Gone?" says I. "Whatter you mean, gone?"

"I can't find her no place!" says Ma. "And I looked everywheres!"

This give me a most unpleasant feeling down my back, and I got to my feet in a hurry.

"Are you sure she ain't hid?" I says, "like the last time," I says.

"Come and see for yourself!" says Ma, and I went, you can bet on that! And sure enough, she wasn't in the box. Ma lifted the wire off the top and lifted out the two old sofa cushions we had put in for comfort and only Maude's husband, 'Frisco, was there. He was as usual lying in about five coils like a boiler-heater, with his wicked-looking flat head on the top, and he stuck out his oyster fork of a tongue, and give us a little hiss, much as to say, why was we always disturbing him. But no Maude.

"Ma!" I began, catching a guilty look on her face. "Ma Gilligan, you left that snake out again! After all the times I ast you not to!"

"Well, it was just for a minute!" she says. "I was playing with her, and then I thought maybe the crullers I had made was cool by then and I went and got a few and when I come back she was gone!"

"Well, she's got to be found, that's all!" I snapped. "All this comes from you insisting on keeping in with them low circus people and boarding their acts for them!"

"But Madame Estelle had to stay with her husband when he fell offen the trapeze and they so devoted!" says Ma. "And I didn't take the big snakes—the substitute is using them—but only her own dear pets which the landlady wouldn't leave her have in her room."

"And now one of them is loose in *my* room!" I says, "which is the general result of charity which, as the poet says, had ought to begin at home," I says. "And you know, Ma, how I feel about snakes. There's nobody in the psycopathic ward got anything on me. If only they had even a few feet instead of so many yards, I wouldn't mind them so much."

"Well, now Mary, I'm real sorry," says Ma. "But not half so sorry as Madame Estelle will be if anything happens to Maude! I'm real fond of the little beauty myself, and

if you had been with a circus all the years I was, you would understand her better!"

Well, believe you me, it wasn't a lack of understanding with me, it was a religious conviction, and why not, for hadn't them beasts made trouble beginning with the original eviction of undesirable tenants, and was I to think it likely that our own janitor would be any more lenient if Maude was to get, say, as far as the elevator? Keeping snakes never got a tenant in right yet and loose ones might set the first of May forward as many months as was necessary. Not to mention my own personal feelings in the matter, which it's a fact I once broke a contract on the Small-Time years ago because a snake-charmer come off just as I was going on and I used to meet her and them in the wings every time.

Well, anyways, I will say it for Ma, she certainly turned in and helped me make a thorough search for Maude, which was going some for a lady of her figure. Looking for a vanished snake in a apartment means considerable gymnastics, because nothing can be overlooked with safety, and I didn't want that parlor-eel slipping anything over on me—

especially her cold stomach in the middle of the night across my face, for instance.

So I and Ma looked under all the furniture and in the pedalcase of the pianola and in the vases and behind the steam radiators, back of the big gold clock, inside the victrola, under the rugs, back of the pictures on the wall and every place:—but no Maude. Finally we even took a look out in the hall, although we knew nobody had opened the front door, and after that we opened the wall safe where we keep our diamonds in a stocking, this being a compromise between Ma's habits and my common-sense. And then we had a peep into the ice-box where Ma found a saucer of pudding which she had someways overlooked at supper but no snake.

And after we had felt under the bath-tub with my best lavender umbrella which what with the limousine it was the first use I ever had for it, and then taken a forlorn hope into the soiled-clothes hamper, we give it up, and sat down with ruined georgette blouses and perfectly wild looking hair and all heated up like a couple of wrestlers. Any one coming in then would of thought we had been indulg-

ing in a family discussion of some kind, and for a matter of that it's the truth. I said a few raw remarks about the kind of a home she run for me and I working as hard as cider to keep it and now she left snakes around, Gawd knows where, and how would a artist like myself get the rest to do justice to my work on the bomb-explosion scene in the last reel of "Bosh or Bolshevik?" which I was going to be shot in only the next day, and if she had to support me instead of I her, she would have a right to leave any animals or minerals around she chose, but this was my flat and although Gawd knew she was welcome, pretty soon we would have none if I was to be made a nervous wreck out of instead of the biggest nerve in pictures. Yes, I said that and a lot more pretty mean stuff as only a daughter can—for even with my refinement I am but a mere human after all, and under the glittering success of my career is several common human failings and at times I act no different from any less well-known female in the bosom of my family.

So I had the last word and Ma was in wrong and went to get lunch without a come-back out of her. Alas! Had I but canned that

foolish chatter of mine! But how could I know she was going to act like she done later because of it? You can't remember forwards and if a person could, it's ten to one they'd quit before they was off the bottle and go back to Heaven whence they come, life being so full of mistakes you could of avoided if only you had done something different from what you did!

II

Well, anyways, Ma went back to the kitchen to fix up a little snack of waffles and honey and poached eggs on hash and cream-cake and strawberries with a cup of cocoa and whipped cream for a light lunch, her lunches being light about the way a "light" motor truck is, and I went back to my joint contract and was so mad I concluded to write into it not alone expenses and Rosco but a cottage or bungaloo, as it is called in Los Angeles, while out there. With which I wrote a refined but firm letter to Goldringer, saying this was my final word on the matter and spoke also for Jim. Then I enclosed the contract and Ma called out the cocoa was getting cold and so I stamped and put it in the hall-slot which I never have

a feeling any letter going down it is headed for anybody except maybe the devil, and not even him unless it don't get stuck on the way. And then I ate, though not with much appetite, what with expecting any moment to see Maude crawl out from some place, and Ma being quiet to a extent not to be fully accounted for by three plates of waffles. It wasn't natural in her, that quiet, but I remembered the doughnuts and laid it to the sequence. Still I tried to get her to talk, as talking, if about herself, generally cheers her quite a lot.

"Anything ail you, Ma?" I says.

"Nothing much," says Ma, lighting into the cream-cake. "Nothing to speak of."

"Tell me about it then!" I says. But Ma wouldn't. She heaved a big sigh and handed me a substitute for what was really on her mind. It was something just as good, I credit her for that.

"You know the stuff you ordered from Schultz?" she says.

"You mean the wet goods I ordered to keep Jim from parching to death this summer?" I says, because although Jim is far from a real drinking man, he having his profession of dancing always in mind even after eleven P. M.

and Gawd knows never fails to realize that sound acrobatics is the basis of all good dancing which a drunkard never yet was, or at least not for over two seasons; still, in spite of all this, Jim is a mere male and a drink or two, especially if difficult to get, is not by any means objectionable to him. And beside he had been two years in France and I didn't want him to feel it had anything on America when he come home, even if I had to go so far as to myself personally replace what Congress had taken away. Do you get me? You do! And I had done it as far as my bank account, cellarette and the liquor-dealer permitted. Which looked like it was going to postpone the drought quite sometime for us. And while here and there stuff like champagne and brandy and vermouth had to be bought, like remnants on a bargain counter—just kind of odds and ends of each—I had one satisfaction out of the buy, and that was getting a case of Old Home Rye—absolutely the last case in the city—probably the last in the whole entire U. S. A., and it was Jim's one best bet. A high-ball of this—just one—with his dinner was about his exact idea of drinking, and I had calculated that the three gallons, taking it at

his rate would last him pretty near a year, and by that time some new vice would surely of been invented to take its place.

Well, anyways, I had ordered it and paid for it, and there wasn't any more of it anywheres, and it and the contract with Goldringer was two of the best surprises I had for Jim.

"Well," says Ma. "I can't say I approve of the demon Rum coming into our—your house, but once money is paid out, I like to see the goods—*all* the goods, delivered," she says.

"What's this leading up to?" I asked.

"To the way that man Schultz cheats you!" says Ma. "He didn't send the Old Home Rye!"

Believe you me, never have I been handed a meaner deal than that, no, not even the night Goldringer first heard of me and came to see my try-out for the big time and my pink tights didn't come.

"Ma!" says I. "Why don't you call him up and find out why didn't he?"

"I've done that!" she says. "And he claims on his oath it was sent with the rest. I spoke

to the boy which brought it and then to Schultz himself. They both claim they give it to Rudie."

Rudie was the janitor but he had missed his profession. He had ought to of been a sleight-of-hand man, for he could make things disappear in a way which would of delighted a morning matinee audience, especially those under twelve years of age. Believe you me, though, he was never known to make anything grow where nothing had been before—not rabbits or even silk handkerchiefs, but it's the truth that he had onct or twice caused a vanished quart of cream to reappear if given a sufficiently hard call quick enough after it was missed. And the minute I heard he was cast for a part in my tragedy, I decided to hear him read his lines right off without no delay, because it was practically impossible that he could of got away with more than a quart yet and I was prepared to go through the business of believing him when he come to the description of how he had dropped it by accident and too bad but it broke.

Which was all right in theory, but Rudie did nothing of the kind. Evidently so long as he was lying he had made up his mind it was

as well to be killed for a case as a quart, as the poet says, and when I sent for him and he had kept me waiting while he sifted the ashes and pounded on the steam pipes and talked to the garbage man and got a light from the cop and chatted with the elevator-girl and a few little odds and ends like that just to show me where I got off, he finally decided to come up. Well, it was seven months to Xmas, so what could I expect? Anyways, he finally made his entrance, down R. C. to footlights, in my Louis-size drawing-room, leaving tracks behind him which Ma spotted with a angry eye as fast as he laid them, and with all the well-known courtesy of the proletariat he looked me in the eye.

"Well?" he says.

"Say, Trotsky!" I says, for I had never liked this bird, as he was on one continued drunk. "Look here, Lenine," I says, glad of the chance to insult him. "A case of fine whisky at sixty dollars net seems to of been avoidably detained in your dug-out. I expect that with a little searching you can stumble on it. And as for that bottle you broke by accident, don't bother to mention it," I says, "because I am gladly doing so for you," I says.

"Only kindly find the rest and we will also forget about this morning's cream."

Probably I hadn't ought to of been so generous, for Rudie sort of swayed a little and give me a pleasant childlike smile out of his unshaved doormat of a face.

"Dunno wash you mean!" he says, real pleasant.

"Jim is right about the kick in that stuff," I says, eyeing him critically. "You certainly have a swell bun!"

"Why, Mish La Tour!" says Rudie. "Don't drink a dropsh! Never toush it."

And with that he give a sigh of disappointment in me which made the place smell like a bar-room!

"But of coush I'll shee if itsh down stairsh!" he says.

Well, there was no use in arguing with him, I could see that all right, all right, but I left him know I wasn't swallowing any such a poor alibi as his own word.

"All right, you second-hand shock absorber!" I says. "Maybe I can't jolt the truth out of you, but I will hand you one small piece of information before you take your reluctant departure. You'll find that whiskey or the cops

will. And if they don't get me a judgment against you, one will come from heaven, that's a cinch, for you not only got the stuff, but you took it off a returning soldier which is a bigger crime than mere patriotic stealing would be," I says. "You wait and see what'll happen to you if you don't come across! We got a long score to settle, we have, and right always wins out in the end, and that's my middle name!"

Well, he went away very proud and hurt to think I would suspect him of such a crime, he being that kind of a drunk. Do you get me? Of course! Gosh! How I do hate to see a person in liquor; really, I think prohibition will be a good thing for all of us, and was myself only storing up a little, for exceptional reasons. And when a person begins talking about federal prohibition and their constitutional rights I can't help but wonder why they don't consider it in the physical as well as the political sense.

Well, anyways, it was a blow to lose that Old Home, and awful irritating on top of Maude. And then, while pulling myself into one of these new accident-policy-destroying narrow skirts which belongs with what is

through courtesy called my new walking suit, the hall-girl brought the mail and Musette give it to me in the midst of my negligee and struggles and I stopped dead when I seen the first letter, for it was marked "Soldier's Mail" and only one which has some one expected home and at the same time welcome, can know how that particular mark thrills. Musette observed me register joy so she registers it too, and I tore open the envelope forgetting the skirt which had a death-grip on my knees, and opened up the page in Jim's dear hand-writing.

Did you ever come to a time in your life where you had one trouble on top of another until it seemed like nothing more could possibly happen except maybe the end of the world, and then something still worse was pulled on you? You have! Well, this letter was pretty near the end of the world to me—at least a distinct postponement of anything which could with any truth be called living. For Jim wasn't coming back with the 70th after all! As I read his words in that dear boyish handwriting of his which he never had time to learn to write better, being like myself quick-

er with his feet than hands, my eyes filled with tears and I stumbled to the day-bed as good as I could with the skirt, and sat down. It seemed he had been put in charge of some special work in Paris and it might be six months before he'd get sent home! Six months! And me getting all ready for a second honeymoon inside of six weeks! And instead of being out in the wholesome country with me at Saratoga or Long Beach or Niagara Falls or some place, he would be in Paris! That was what I had to face and any woman will readily understand my feelings.

Believe you me, I didn't care for Maude or the Old Home or the contract or anything for over three-quarters of a hour. And I had to wash my face and powder my nose three times after I was finally dressed on account of breaking down again when just completed.

Whenever a person has a real sorrow come to them the best way to do is control it quick before it controls you. So after I had indulged in the womanly weep which certainly was coming to me, I braced up and got into the new suit with the idea of taking as brisk a walk as it would allow of. Then I put on a new hat which I had intended for my second

honeymoon but which would never see it or him, as it would undoubtedly be out of style by the time Europe had made up its mind one way or another, and I was just going to leave when the bell rung and Ma come in to say it was a caller.

"It's that Mr. Mulvaney from the Welcome Home Committee, the one that had you on the 'phone yesterday," says Ma. And after a minute I kind of caught control of myself and says well, all right, I would see him and went in.

"Well, it sure is strange the birds they pick out for these deeds of synthetic patriotism. This one come from the neighborhood of Fourteenth Street and must of got his appointment of chief welcomer from the way he give the glad hand. You would of thought he was cranking a flivver that wouldn't crank the way he kept on shaking after any real need was past. And if he was to of greeted each of the boys the way he done me, the army wouldn't be demobilized in our generation! Also he had a suit on him which spoke for itself and a watch-chain which must of posed for them in the cartoons of Capital—do you get me? Sure! I and he had had a long talk on the telephone as per above, and so as soon as he

left go his cinch on my hand, he got right down to business.

"Now, Miss La Tour—er—it—er—gives me great pleasure to think you will take charge of the Theatrical Women's Division," he says. "Er—I am a great admirer of yours—that picture you done, 'Cleopatria,' now—great stuff!"

Well, I let that pass, because how would such a self important bird as this know my art when he sees it, and if he enjoyed Theda, why not leave him be? I changed the subject at once for fear he would be confusing me with Caruso next.

"And so I'm to spend ten thousand of the hundred thousand iron-men raised by the Welcome Committee?" I says hastily. "How nice. What will it go for?"

"That is for you and your committee to decide," he says. "I'm sure you will think up something tasty," he says. "And go to the limit—we need ideas."

Well, anybody could see that. But I only says all right.

"I suppose you are familiar with committees?" says this human editorial-page-sketch.

"I'm never too familiar with anybody," I

says stiffly. "But I have been acquainted with more than one committee."

"Well, here are the papers I promised you —the general scheme and so forth. The central committee will meet as is indicated here. See you at them. Pleased to of seen you off the screen! You certainly was fine in 'Shoulder Arms'!"

And before I could get my breath he had looked at a handsome watch no bigger than a orange, humped into his coat and was off in a shower of language that left me no comeback.

Believe you me, I was glad when he had squoze out through our typical apartment hall and the gilt elevator had snapped him up. For to hand me ten thousand to spend on welcoming a bunch of other women's husbands was, to soft pedal it, rubbing it in. I was only about as upset as that spilled milk that was cried over and no wonder at 18 cents a qt. Well, anyways, it was no light thing to face, going on with this work and Jim's letter scarcely dry from my tears. But having promised over the telephone and being given no chance to refuse in the parlour, I would keep my word if not my heart from breaking.

Because, anyways, if I was simply to do nothing to occupy myself except maybe a few thousand feet of fillum and rehearsing my special dance act for the Palatial and my morning exercises and walking my five miles a day and all that quiet home stuff which gives a person too much time to think, what would I think, except a lot of unprintable stuff about any administration which was keeping him in a town like Paris, France? And the only comfort I could see in sight was to work hard to give the boys that *was* coming a real welcome and remember that Jim never was a skirt-hound—that I ever saw.

III

Having reached this resolve I decided to go on the walk I had mapped out anyways, because what is home with a disappeared snake in it? And so I started, and as I come past the door in the lower hall, which its marked "Superintendent," which is Riverside-Drivese for Janitor, what would I hear but Rudie singing to himself out of the fullness of his heart or something.

I went out in wrath and the spring sun and

after a while I begun to feel less sore and miserable in my heart, partially because of the fresh air and partially through irritation at the stylish trouser-leg that both of mine was in. But the day was too sweet for a person to stay mad long. Ain't it remarkable the way spring can creep into even a city and somehow make it enchanted and your heart kind of perk up and take notice—do you get me? You do, or Gawd pity you! It's the light, I guess, just the same as the audience holds hands when they turn on the ambers with a circular drop for a sunset or something.

And by the time I had walked along the Avenue and seen all the decorations which was already put up for the first regiments home, I commenced getting real fired and excited with my new job. It looked like the powdered-sugar industry was going to suffer because about all the plaster in the country seemed to be being used on arches which looked like dago-wedding cakes and you actually missed the dolls dressed like brides and grooms off the top of them. And here and there was some funny looking columns of the same white stuff and on the Public Library steps a bunch of spears and shields was thrown all over the place just

as if a big Shakespearian production had suddenly give it up in despair and left their props and hoofed it back to Broadway. It certainly was imposing.

Up at 59th Street was a arch that looked like Coney Island frozen solid. It was all of little pieces of glass:—heavy glass and millions of pieces. I don't know what good they did, but they shone something grand, and must of cost a terrible lot of money. I guessed the boys would certainly feel proud to march under it provided none of it fell on their heads.

Believe you me, by the time I got home my head was full of imaginary architecture like Luna Park and Atlantic City jumbled together with a set I seen in "The Fall of Rome" when we was shooting it at Yonkers. And after I had squirmed out of my walking suit and was a free woman once more, in a negligee, which is French for kimona which is Japanese for wrapper, well, anyways, I lay in it and opened up the evening paper because I am not one to let the news get ahead on me and have acquired the habit of reading it regular the same as my daily bath.

But it was hard to keep my attention on it because Maude was still missing and also I

kept thinking, when not of her, of the lovely arches and so forth my ten thousand would build. I had about settled on pink-stucco, with real American beauties strung on it and a pair of white kittens in plaster—symbol of the best known Theatrical Ladies Association in Broadway, and I expect the world—at the top, when I opened the paper again and I see something which set my mind thinking.

"70th will add thousands to ranks of unemployed."

Yes, that's just what it said. And I went on and read the piece where it said how enough men to start a real live city was being fed at soup-kitchens and bread lines, not in Russia or Berlin, but right in N. Y. C., N. Y., U. S. A.! Somehow, coming right on top of all their arches and so forth, it sort of struck me in the pit of my stomach and give me the same sinking sensation like a second helping of griddle-cakes a hour later—you know! The thought of all that money going on arches that after they was once marched under was no good to anybody but the ones which built them and the ones which carted them away, had me worried. Think of all the soup that glass and plaster would of made! Do you get me? You

do or you're a simp! And it also besides struck me that while the incoming boys would undoubtedly enjoy them city frostings, them which had already marched under them and was now in the bread-line must be kind of fed up with it. Then I thought of the ten thousand intrusted to me to spend which had been gladly given in small sections by willing citizens who wanted to do some little thing to show appreciation to the boys which had went over there, and I begun to realize I had been told I could spend it anyways I wanted to.

And when I thought of that pink arch and roses I blushed, although nobody had, fortunately, heard me mention it, except the two fool dogs, aloud.

Believe you me, I then see like a bolt from the blue, as the poet says, that arches was all right in their way but they was in the traffic's way at best and made mighty poor eating. And so naturally with Ma having it continually before me, I thought of ten thousand dollars worth of eats, because while there is quite a lot of red X canteens for men in uniform, how about the poor birds which had just got out of a uniform and not yet got into a

job? Besides there is something kind of unpermanent about food unless a salary to get more with follows it as a chaser.

And so I lay there in comfort all but for the thought of Maude, and figured and figured what would I do. It seemed it was a cinch to get money from people to give the boys a welcome but what to spend it on was certainly a stiff one. But after a while I commenced to get a idea. Which it's a fact I am seldom long without one when needed which together with my great natural talent is what has made me the big success I am.

Work! That was the welcome the boys needed. Work and a little something substantial to start on. So this is what I figured. Suppose we was to divide up that ten thousand, how many boys would it take care of, and how?

Say we had ten men. A thousand each. Too much, of course. Twenty men. Five hundred per ea. Still too much. Well, then forty men. Two fifty. Well, they could use it of course, but it was not a constructive idea. It was too much for a present and not enough to invest. So how about 80. Well, that was

$125. per man. This was doing something pretty good by eighty men that would very likely need it, but it seemed sort of unfair not to take in more of the boys. So I split it again and had one hundred and sixty boys with $62.50 in their pockets.

Well, I felt kind of good over this idea and there was only two real troubles with it which is to say that $31.25 for three hundred and twenty boys looked nicer if there was only some way to handle it right. But how?

I put in another hard think and then I got it. The way to make that $31.25 a real present was to make it a payment on something and then with the other hand pass out a job at the same time, which would not alone keep the soldier but allow him to cover the difference.

And to get away with this all I needed now was a popular investment and 320 perfectly good steady jobs.

Well, with the Victory Loan the first part was easy enough, and I concluded to pay twenty-five dollars on each of three hundred and twenty one hundred dollar victory notes, making myself responsible for the lot the same as if I was a bank and getting a job for each note and having the giver of the job hold the

note on the soldier and pay me the instalments and I would pay myself back, or if not nobody would be stung outside of me, supposing any one of them failed to come across. I was going to take a big lot for myself and another ten didn't much matter.

And then with the remaining $6.25 each, well, I would pool that for leaflets enough to go around the whole division and on the leaflet I would have printed the facts and a list of the jobs and just what they was, with how much kale per week went with them, and see that the boys got them while the parade was forming and then it would be up to them, because the home folks can only do so much and then it's up to the army their own selves just as with munitions and sugar and red X work while the big show was on. They did the work but we gave them the job—we and the Germans. And now all we could do again was to give them a job—and it's enough, judging from how they went after the first one.

And then, just as I come smack up against the awful fact of where would I get them jobs Ma come in and says the hot-dogs and liberty-cabbage which it's the truth we always translate them into American at our table, was get-

ting cold and as long as I was paying for them I'd better eat them while they was fit. So I says all right and we went in and did so.

Believe you me, it certainly is a remarkable thing the way you start on a afternoon's work like I done, all full of vigor and strength and how your ideas and courage and everything will sort of leak away toward the time to put on the feed-bag at Evensong. And how again the ideas and pep comes back in the evening once you have eaten. There was almost perfect silence the first few minutes we sat down or would of been except for Ma taking her tea out of the saucer, which I can't learn her not to do and the only way I keep her from disgracing me at the Ritz and ect, is to make sure she don't order it. But when the first pangs was attended to I commenced to feel more conversational.

"Work," I says, thinking of what I had been thinking of. "Work is the one thing that stands by a person. Everything else in life can go bluey and their work will see them through. That's why it's been so popular all these years, and where these Bolsheviks make their big mistake. Because they don't work

and not working they get bored to death and so they commence rioting. Do you remember that quotation from that well-known cowboy poet, Omaha Kiyim, "Satan will find business still for idle hands to do?" How good that applies to strikes—idle hands—ain't that perfect? And it written so long ago!"

"How long?" says Ma.

"Oh, I dunno. Maybe three hundred years," I says.

Ma laid down her knife and spoon, she being quite entirely through, and looked me in the eye.

"I will remember them words, daughter," she says very solemn.

And it's the truth I never noticed how serious she was about it until I come to look back on it nearly three weeks later.

IV

And during that time which has been so immortally fixed in writing by the grandest book with the same name, I was as busy as the great American cootie is supposed to be on his native hearth—only it ain't that piece of furniture but another, of course. Do you

get me? I'm afraid so! Well, I was as busy as what you think. To begin with I called a committee-meeting in the privacy of my grey French enamel boudoir where I wear my boudoir cap and have the day-bed hitched and this committee meeting consisted entirely of myself and the two fool dogs. And after I had gone through all the motions, I appointed myself a sub-committee of one to carry out the meeting's resolutions and do all the work.

This is about what would of happened if I had done it the regular way and asked Ruby Roselle and Maison Rosabelle and the other girls. We would of had a mahogany table and a gavel and a pitcher of ice-water and a lot of hot-air and a wasted morning and in the end I would of been the goat anyways, so I thought why not do it single-handed in the first place and be done? I could print all their names on the leaflets and they would be perfectly satisfied.

So having got over the necessary formalities as you might say, I accepted the nomination and got to work. Fortunately I wasn't doing anything except a solo dance at the Palatial at supper-time and one picture. And so I had most of my days to myself. The Fix-

ings on the Avenue grew and blossomed and so did my contribution to the Welcome Home Committee. I didn't get to go to any of their meetings but I don't imagine they even missed me at the time. And while the arches and other motion-picture scenery was being as completed as they ever would be, so was my list. My monument took up less space, but when you gave it the once-over it seemed maybe a little more rain-proof than the others. Apparently all there was to it was slips of paper six by eight with this printed on them. At the top it says:

"WELCOME HOME"

"HOWDY BOYS, AND OUR HEARTFELT THANKS! DO YOU NEED A JOB? HERE ARE THREE HUNDRED AND TWENTY AND A VICTORY NOTE GOES WITH EVERY ONE!"

Then come the list. I will put down a part of it so you can realize what a assortment of things has to be done to keep the seive in civilization.

4 handsome juveniles for motion-picture work—stage experience unnecessary.

2 experienced camera men.

2 marcel-wavers.

6 chemists, Marie La Tour Complexion Powder Co.

2 salesmen, Marie La Tour Turkish Cigarette Co.

16 waiters, Palatial Hotel.

1 traveling man, Marie La Tour Silk Underwear Co.

2 experienced lineotypers, Motion Picture Gazette.

2 experienced pressmen, Motion Picture Gazette.

1 publicity man, experienced, Motion Picture Gazette.

3 fillum cutters.

1 stylish floorman. Must be handsome and refined, not over 30. Apply Maison Rosabelle, Hats and Gowns.

1 orchestra complete, with leader. Apply "Chez La Tour" (my old joint of parlour-dancing days).

30 chorus men.

2 sparring partners for Madame Griselda, the famous lady-boxer.

And ect, add affinities, as the Romans used to say. And every one a real genuine job

paying good money. And getting them nailed was no cinch, believe you me, except, of course, I being such a prominent person I didn't have as much trouble as some would of. Especially where a firm was using my name on something, they could hardly refuse me. I seen everybody personally myself, and only the bosses and in the end nobody had turned me down except the one from which I had bought my new bear-cat roadster for Jim's welcome home present and it was *some* roadster, being neatly finished in pale lavender with yellow running-gear and a narrow red trim and tapestry upholstery on the seats which was so low and easy you involuntarily started to pull up the blankets after you got settled. You know, the kind of a car you have to look up from to see which way the cop is waving.

Well, anyways, you would of thought the bird which had sold it to me for cash money, him being the manager of the luxurious car-corrall himself, would offer to take on some of the boys. But no, he says there was too many auto salesmen in the world already, and that they had ought to be diverted into selling some of the new temperance drinks where their

trained imagination would undoubtedly be of great value.

Well, anyways, he was the only one turned me down and I had the slips printed and stored away in a couple of cretone hat-boxes and commenced allotting the victory-note pledges. And then I tripped over the fact that I was a job short. There was the stuff all printed, and a job too short and it the night before the big parade! Well, I decided that when the time come I would make the extra job if I couldn't find it, and believe you me, I was as wore out looking for them as a Ham with his hair cut like a Greenwich village masterpiece. Not that I ever saw one and I have often wondered where the artists which drew them that way, did.

But in the meantime I had got hold of the Dahlia sisters, and Madame Broun and La Estelle, and Queenie King and a lot of other easy-lookers and had it all fixed for them to be on hand below Fourteenth Street at ten o'clock to give out the slips while the boys was mobilizing or whatever they call it. And then just as I was getting into the limousine with Musette and the two cretone hat boxes full and the two fool dogs and Ma, who would come up

to me but Ruby Roselle with a new spring set of sables which it is remarkable how she does it in burlesque, still far be it from me to say a word about any person, having been in the theatrical world too long not to realize that it is seldom as red as it is painted and that the coating of black is only on the outside.

Well, anyways, up she comes from her new flat which is only two doors from mine and a awful mean look in those green eyes of hers under a sixty dollar hat that looked it, while mine cost seventy-five and looked fifteen, which is far more refined only Ruby would never believe that: which is one main difference between her and I. And she stopped me with one of those deadly sweet womanly smiles and says in a voice all milk and honey and barbed wire, she says:

"How's this, dearie, about the Theatrical Ladies Committee," she says. "I only just heard of it from Dottie Dalhia," she says. "What was it made you leave me off?"

Well, seeing that the armistice was not yet broken I felt I might let her distribute a few leaflets, although I had left her name off the signatures at the bottom on account of her never having proved she wasn't a alien enemy

to anything besides dramatic art, which hadn't to be proved. So I handed her a string of talk about this being a small affair and how I had thought she would of been too busy to do anything just now, which made her mad because there is some talk on account of that she wasn't working just then. But she took a few leaflets and read the signature at the bottom. "Theatrical Ladies' Welcome Committee" and got real red in the face.

"Why, my friend Mr. Mulvaney spoke to me about this!" she says. "I was to of been treasurer, or something! Do you mean to say you spent ten thousand dollars on *them!*" and she pointed to the leaflets like a one-act small-time.

"Yep!" I says. "Take 'em home and try 'em on your piano!" I says. "But you will have please to pardon me now. I got to beat it!"

And with that I climbed in with the rest of the family and we was rushed down town to N. Y.'s Bohemian Quarter, where the 70th Division was about to hang around waiting to parade. Which it is certainly remarkable the places the highly moral U. S. A. Government picks out for her soldiers to wait about in say

from Paris to Washington Square, and I think their wives and sweethearts have stood for a good deal of this sort of thing, to say nothing of wives and sisters being kept from going abroad. I don't know have any homes been broken up this way, but I will say that Marsailles and Harlem would of listened better to the patiently waiting homebodies.

Well, anyways, down we went to the amateur white lights, and by the time we reached Twenty-Third we begun to run into bunches of the boys. Bands was playing and all, and —oh my Gawd, what's the use trying to tell about it? There was plenty to tell, but ain't every one *seen* it? If not at N. Y. C., why in some town which may be more jay but with its heart in the right place, and the heart is the thing which counted this time as per usual. Believe you me, mine was in my throat and so was everybody elses when they seen them lean brown boys with their grown-up faces!

Well, we stopped down to Eleventh and Sixth and got out and commenced walking around handing out the leaflets, and at first they weren't taking 'em very seriously, but pretty soon they began to get on to who I was and of course that caught them and a good

many tucked the slips inside their tin hats and all of them pretty near had seen me in "The Kaiser's Killing" and I got pretty near as big a ovation as I had tried to offer them. And as for the parade they was very good-natured, but it seemed to me that as usual the stay-at-homes in the grandstands was getting the best of it and the boys doing all the work, for parading, no more than a first-class dancing act, ain't quite the pleasure to the ones that does it, that it is to them that only stands and waits, as the saying is.

V

The crowds on the Avenue was something fierce, and the only ones which had the right of way, outside of officers and cops, was the motion-picture men. I seen Ted Bearson, my own camera man from the Goldringer Studios, and Rosco, my publicity man, and they was talking together. I stepped back in among the boys, because I wasn't looking for any personal publicity myself on this particular day, wishing to leave all that to the division and I knew that if Ted was to see me he would shoot me.

But ain't it the truth that the modester a public person like me is, the more attention they attract? My sweet, quiet voice, silent though snappy clothes, and retiring manner have been in Sunday spreads and motion-picture magazine articles practically all over the world and America, and my refinement is my best-known characteristic. Publicity is like men. Leave 'em alone and they simply chase you. Pretend you don't want them, and you can't lose them. And the more reluctant I am about being noticed, the wilder the papers get! Only, of course, without a good publicity man this wouldn't, perhaps, be a perfectly safe bet.

So this day, having got rid of all my leaflets, I was slowly working my way toward the Avenue, when publicity was thrust upon me.

You know this Bohemian part of New York is made up of old houses which is so picturesque through not having much plumbing and so forth and heat being furnished principally by the talk of the tenants on Bolshevism and ect. These inconveniences makes a atmosphere of freedom and all that and furnishes a district where the shoe-clerk can go and be his true self among the many wild, free spirits from Chicago and all points west. Well, this neigh-

borhood could stand a lot of repairs, not alone in the personal sense, but in a good many of the buildings, but these are seldom made until interfered with by the police or building departments. And on the corner of the street which I was now at there was a big old house full of people who *did* something, I suppose, and these were mostly bursting out through the open windows or sitting on the little balconies which looked like they couldn't hold a flower pot and a pint of milk with any safety much less a human. But there they was, sitting, with all the indifference to fate, for which they are so well known. I couldn't but notice the risk they ran, but I should worry how many radicals are killed, and so I paid but little heed until I noticed that there was three little kids—all ragged children of the dear proletariat—which some of the Bohemians had hauled up on a balcony which was too frail for adults. The minute I see that balcony I was scared to death, although the short-haired girl and the long-haired man which was letting the kids out on it was laughing and care-free as you please. The kids got out all right, and then something awful happened.

Right below was a open space at the head of this particular column, where the officers and color-bearers and ect was. Rosco and Ted was getting a picture of them. But while I generally watch a camera, this time I didn't on account of watching the kids. And as I looked that rotten old balcony broke and one them, a little girl, fell through and hung there, caught by her skirt, and it a ragged one at that. Everybody screamed and yelled and sort of drew back, which is the first way people act at a horror before they begin to think. I yelled myself, but I started toward her, because the radicals couldn't reach her from above and from below the ground was fully twenty feet away and nothing but a fence with spikes and a dummy window-ledge way to one side. But I had a idea I might make it for what with two generations on the center trapeze and never a drop of liquor and not to mention what I done in pictures, I think quicker than some and act the same. But my new skirt prevented, and ahead of me dashed a soldier.

In a minute he had scaled the wall and worked his way along the spikes to that ledge, and then while the crowd watched breathless-

ly he had that kid under one arm and was back on the wall again. He held her close, turned around, crouched down and then jumped. And as he jumped I screamed and run forward, for Oh My Gawd, it was Jim!

I don't know how I got there, but when I come to I and that scared kid was all mixed up in his arms and the three of us crying to beat the band which had struck up and the crowd yelling like mad. And it was a peach of a stunt, believe you me.

"Didn't you get my cable?" Jim says. And I says no, and we clinched again. And then we heard a funny, purring sound right behind and broke loose and turned around and there was that devil of a Ted taking a close-up!

"Hold it! Damn you, hold it another ten feet!" yells Rosco, who was dancing around like a regulation director, just back of Ted. "Fine, Fine! Oh, boy, what a pair of smiles! Say, folks, we shot the whole scene—*some* News Weekly Feature. Oh say, can you see me, Rosco, *the* publicity man!"

Honest to Gawd you would of thought he had gone crazy! And that bone-headed crowd couldn't make out was the whole thing staged

or real. Believe you me, I had to pinch myself to know was it real or not, but thank Gawd it was, it was! And after nearly two years! Do you know how that feels? Give a guess! And then, just as I thought now this cruel war and everything is over, why that roughneck of a officer give the order to fall in and of course Jim had to and left me there with that kid in my arms for Ted to make a couple of stills for the papers.

Believe you me, I couldn't tell how many he took, or when, because seeing Jim so sudden and unexpected had pretty near killed me, and I couldn't say anything much about the parade either, because something kept me from seeing it and I guess it was my own glad tears. Anyways, I had three wet handkerchiefs in my bag when I got home and one of them a perfect stranger's.

Well, of course, I expected the parade would break up when it struck Harlem and the boys would hurry right home. And did they? They *did* not! I hurried right home, all right, all right, but not so Jim. And for a long while I was sitting there in one of my trousseau dresses and a fearful state of mind over what had he done to get killed since I last seen him.

But hours went by and still he didn't come. And I didn't know his 'phone or where he was or anything. The only clue I had that the whole business was a fact and no dream was the cable, which had come after he did, saying he would be home as arranged after all.

Believe you me, I hope never to live through another twenty-four hours like them that followed, because I couldn't eat or sleep, not knowing where he was.

Next morning I wouldn't even look at the papers which was Sunday and full of our and the division's pictures. And Monday was worse, because even although Jim might be alive none of the hospitals nor yet the morgue had him, and so I commenced to think he had gone back on me. A telegram come from the coast saying "Great Sunday story bring Rosco contract follows," but what did I care for that stuff without Jim? Ma was very silent all this time, and kept in her room a lot, with the door shut. And then late Monday afternoon the door-bell rung, and my heart leaped to my feet like it had done at every tinkle for 48 hours, and I went myself, but it was only Ruby Roselle and Mr. Mulvaney of the Welcome

Home Committee with her! The men that girl knows! Well, she sees them in another light than I and it's a good thing all tastes don't run the same. But this was such a surprise I asked them in before I thought and pretty near forgot my own troubles for a minute.

Ruby cuddled down into her kolinsky wrap and give me the fish-eye, as she addressed me in her own sweet way as a woman to her best enemy.

"Dearie," she says, tucking in a imaginary curl. "Dear, Johnnie here was over to my flat and we got speaking of you by accident, and he's anxious to know where's the money he gave you, and why no decorations as was intended?"

"Yes, Miss La Tour," says the old bird, which it was plain she had made a even more perfect fool of him than he had been before. "Yes, Miss La Tour, it's a serious thing," he says. "I understand you didn't really call even one meeting and as for decorations—!! Well, what can you tell us?"

Well, I told him how I come to think of what I thought of, and the jobs which I had 319 of and the notes and all, and while I

talked I could see plain enough that I was getting in worse every minute, because they had come determined to find me guilty, and no matter what I said, it would of listened queer with them two pairs of glassy eyes on me.

"I had a hunch," I wound up, "that maybe something a little substantial would be welcome," I says, "because after all a person can't live on plaster arches and paper flowers, and three hundred and nineteen jobs ought to take care of a considerable percent of the ones that need it," I says. "And so while your arches are all right," I says, "you must admit they are principally for show."

When I got through Mr. Mulvaney cleared his throat and didn't seem to know just how to go on; but Ruby give him an eye, and so he cleared his throat again and changed back to her side.

"This is all *most* irregular," he says very dignified. "Most irregular. You will certainly have to appear before the general committee and give them an accounting. What you have done amounts to a misuse of public-funds!"

My Gawd, I nearly fainted at that! But

before I could say a word a voice spoke up from the doorway.

"Like hell it does!" says Jim, which that dear kid had left himself in with his key and listened to the whole business. "Like hell it's a misuse!" he says, coming into the room and putting his arm around me. "You just let the public and the soldiers take their choice! Give all the facts to all the newspapers and we will furnish the photographs free! Go to it! Get busy! And—get out!"

Well, they got, and what happened then I will not go into because there are things even a self-centered woman won't put on paper! Poor Jim, and him back in camp to get deloused and demobilized and his tooth-brush, and a few parting words of appreciation and ect, these past 48 hours which it seems is the rule for all soldiers, and I suppose they did need the rest after that parade before taking up domestic life once more.

Well, anyways, that afternoon late, while him and me was thoroughly enjoying our joint contract and the Sunday spreads with our pictures and all, in walks Ma with her hat and dolman on and a suit-case in one hand, and

'Frisco, the he-snake in his box, in the other hand.

"For the love of Mike, Ma Gilligan, where are you going to?" I says, looking at her idly.

"I'm leaving you forever!" says Ma, in a deep voice.

"Leaving us? Whatter you mean, leaving us?" I says, taking notice and my head off Jim's shoulder.

"I'm going back to work," says Ma. "I'm not going to be dependent on you no longer," she says, "nor a burden in my old age," she says. "And now that you got Jim back I shall only be in the way, so good-by, Gawd bless you!"

"Why, Ma Gilligan!" I yells, jumping to my feet. "How you talk! Besides what on earth do you think you could do?"

"Oh, I got a job," she flashes, proudly. "I'm going back to the circus!"

Believe you me, that pretty near had me floored.

"The circus!" I says. "What nonsense! Why a trapezer has to be half your age to say nothing of weight!"

"I'm not going on no trapeze at my years!"

says Ma. "I'm going back as Fat Lady. One hundred a week and expenses!"

All of a sudden I realized the full meaning of them doughnuts and cocoa and ect she had eat these past months. She had been deliberately training and as usual was successful. I sprung to my feet and hung around Ma's neck like a ten-year-old.

"Oh Ma!" I says. "Don't! Please don't go back! Whatever would we do without you?" I says. And Jim added his entreaties.

"Why, Ma Gilligan, what bally rot!" he says, which it's quite noticeable the amount of English he's picked up over there. "What a silly ass you are, old dear!" he says. "Here we are going to California and who would cook for us if not you?" he says, "with the cook-question like it is out there?"

Well, that weakened Ma considerable, for cooking is her middle name. So she set down the suit-case.

"Ma!" I begged her. "We *couldn't* have too much of you, and you would never be in the way or a burden no matter what the scales say. For heaven's sake take off that hat, it's too young for you, and burden us with the first home cooking Jim has had in two years!"

Well, she give in at that, and sat down the snake and her dolman and pocket-book.

"Well, all right then!" she says. "I'll stay!" Which is about all the emotion Ma ever shows. "Whew, but it's hot in here!" she says and turns to open the window and we left her do it, because we seen she didn't want us to notice her tears. And as she opened it she gives a shriek and leans way over, grabbing at something. And hardly had she yelled than from below come a holler and a flow of language the like of which I had never heard, no, not even at the studio when something went wrong! Then Ma commenced to laugh something hysterical and pulled herself back in through the window and leaned against the side of it, hollering her head off.

"What is it?" I says.

"It's Maude!" gasps Ma. "She was shut under the winder and when I opened it she fell out and lit on Rudie's head which was sitting right underneath."

Well, we could hardly hear her for the noise in the kitchen. The dumb-waiter was buzzing like all possessed. I and Jim rushed out and there, lickety-split, come the dumb-waiter only it was more inarticulate than dumb by then,

and on it the case of Old Home lacking only three quarts.

"I find your whiskey, Miss La Tour!" says Rudie's voice, very weak and shagy from below. "I chust find him and send him right away, quick!"

"Thanks old dear!" chortled Jim. "Come up and have a drink on me!"

"No tanks!" yelled Rudie. "I'm leaving this blace right now foreffer!"

Well, we should worry! I turned to Jim, a big load off my mind.

"Jim," I says solemnly. "There is the three hundred and twentieth job!"

THE END

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BELIEVE YOU ME!

NINA WILCOX PUTNAM